

The background of the entire cover is a photograph of a stone staircase. The steps are made of large, flat, grey stones and lead up a hillside covered in green moss and small plants. Tall trees are visible in the background, creating a forest setting.

# **10,000 Steps Straight Up**

**Inspirational Short Stories  
From  
Sacred Mountains**

**Dennis Lunt and Anita Lunt**

**Moose Mountain Publishing  
Estes Park • Colorado • USA**

10,000 STEPS STRAIGHT UP  
Inspirational Short Stories From Sacred Mountains

by  
Dennis Lunt and Anita Lunt  
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[info@MooseMountainPublishing.com](mailto:info@MooseMountainPublishing.com)

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## **DEDICATION**

To all of our family and friends, who have  
supported and encouraged our adventures:  
Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for  
believing in us.

To all of our life teachers:  
You challenged us to learn and grow.  
Here is fruit from seeds that you planted.  
Thank you for loving us enough to push us past  
our comfort zones.

## **SPECIAL THANKS**

DigitalGlobe  
Longmont, Colorado  
for tasking satellites to capture temple images  
from Earth orbit, 280 miles high.

Lowe Alpine®  
Louisville, Colorado  
for providing backpacking equipment  
for the mountain expeditions.



# PREFACE

If it was easy, it would have already been done  
by someone else.

If not us, then who?  
If not now, then when?

It is about the journey  
and the amazing people that we encountered  
– not about us or the destinations.

Herein shall be recounted a collection of true stories about adventures experienced while on photographic expeditions to Chinese mountains where kung fu martial arts originated. Chronicled here are assorted tales of fortuitous events and inspirational people. These travel anecdotes describe the trials and tribulations, the sweet and the bitter, both comic and tragic, while on pilgrimages to sacred mountains during the last 20 years.

## *Note From the Editor:*

Chinese-to-English translation is complicated by pronunciation and spelling. The Wade-Giles system has been used herein for romanization of Mandarin Chinese characters and words, as it is probably familiar to most readers. In some instances, a pinyin form may be used or included for clarity.



TENS OF THOUSANDS OF STEPS

HUA MOUNTAIN



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*The following images are included to spark the imagination and enhance the reading experience of this book's anecdotes and adventures.*

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Front Cover: Dragon Ridge at Hua Mountain,  
a granite staircase along the spine of a knife-edge  
formation, 400 feet long at a 60° angle.

Title Page: Stairs on Omei Mountain, near the Buddhist monastery  
called "Temple of Sleeping Clouds."

Preface-opposite: Kung fu school near the Songyue Pagoda,  
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Table of Contents-opposite: Hua Mountain near East Peak.

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Wudang Mountain.





# THE HAPPIEST MOUNTAIN PORTER



It was November. As a sliver of dawn light broke over the horizon through the brisk fall air, a lean peasant made habitual motions to prepare for another arduous day of climbing. Cheng Diweng's breakfast was boiled cabbage, a small portion of porridge, and goat's milk. He packed a glass jar of hot tea to start the day's trek.

Mr. Cheng donned his jacket to ward off the morning chill and wound twine around his shoulder pole to stabilize the loads that he would be assigned to carry 20 miles up Hua Mountain. He was employed as a porter, a bearer of heavy loads to supply the needs of scattered monasteries on this ancient granite sanctuary. His energetic gate of easy, even strides quickly brought him to the base of the mountain. The cool morning air frosted his breath.

On the white monolithic cliffs of Hua, soft, autumn gold rays of light finally broke through the clouds, and the sun rose above the surrounding peaks. A

wide plateau provided relief from narrow stair steps, where passing hikers rub their shoulders on the steep mountain slopes. We had just traversed the knife-edge of Hua Mountain's Dragon Ridge, a long, narrow section of 60-degree stairs, framed with precipitous cliffs on both sides. Our brief respite was disturbed by a loud voice echoing far below. Soon the intermittent tones became boisterous. What we first perceived was chanting. Then the sounds revealed a Mandarin male voice reciting poetry. After a brief pause, his gruff tenor voice broke into song that echoed through the granite caverns with operatic timbre.

We sat with great anticipation, realizing the singer was heading our way. Just as the tune ended, an old man carrying 10 brightly colored boxes, balanced on a shoulder pole, appeared around the corner of the cliff 100 yards below us. With great agility, Mr. Cheng maneuvered past other hikers. While still plodding up



the stairs, he reached into his pocket and pulled out a wooden flute. His weathered fingers lightly danced across the holes, and a pastoral melody flowed from his lips through the instrument. He was soon upon us and the whole plateau, where we rested, was awash with his splendid music.

In a few moments, he finished and set down his load of boxes. Atop all of the parcels were his jacket, a postal mail pouch destined for one of the summit monasteries, and a worn plastic shopping bag containing his own personal items. All of the hikers gathered on the plateau applauded loudly, making him smile at their compliment. We bowed to him and expressed our appreciation. Mr. Cheng was the center of attention.

Having little language skill in Mandarin, we could only smile joyfully as he proclaimed his willingness to further entertain us. Another lovely tune drifted from the wooden flute. The lively melody enticed more hikers to assemble on the narrow crag. Another round of applause followed his performance. Then he reached into his personal belongings bag, took out a paper envelope, and displayed a handful of worn photographs that had been taken of him with other tourists. Letters too, that he had received from afar. He seemed very proud of those precious mementoes.

Sensing his love for such tokens, we rummaged through our packs and found our own collection of self-portraits, attired in our martial arts uniforms, that we had made to share with people during our pilgrimages. As we bowed and presented our photo,

he sprang up and yelled, “Kung fu!” which caused everyone to cluster close around him.

But looking over his shoulder was not a sufficient viewing opportunity for the masses. Soon our picture was passed through the crowd, while the happy porter jabbered on about his newly found friends. The jubilation of the moment was suddenly shattered when the porter tried to retrieve his new photo souvenir. Mr. Cheng’s panic-stricken voice pierced the noisy throng. Anger was apparent on the porter’s face and we drew back, unsure of our role in the confused turmoil.

Fortuitously, our traveling companion, Shaolin Grandmaster Sin Kwang Thé (pronounced “Tay,” like day), arrived at the plateau and witnessed the commotion in the crowd. After we bowed to honorably acknowledge the presence of our estimable kung fu instructor, he asked if we had given something to the old man. We admitted that we had given him a photo of ourselves and were unsure if we had committed some impropriety in doing so, thinking the chaos was somehow our fault. Grandmaster Thé explained that the porter was distraught because someone had taken the special gift we had given him. Mr. Cheng was demanding the thief return his property.

Without hesitation, we took action to correct the injustice felt by the beleaguered porter. Searching our photo collection again, we found two different photos of us posing with martial arts weapons. Mr. Cheng’s expression instantly changed as we handed him the new photographs and his smile spread wide again. He



spoke to us in a calm voice and his eyes gleamed with renewed pleasure. Grandmaster Thé translated the old man's gratitude that we humbly accepted with smiles and bows in return. He wrote his address on a scrap of paper, which is how we learned his name.

As we continued our trek up the mountain, our grandmaster explained that this man, like the other porters employed to carry heavy loads of supplies up and down the steep cliffs, are hired for their strong backs, balance, and climbing skills. The peasant porters earn about \$1.25 a day, and they usually work seven days a week.

More of Hua Mountain's formidable granite cliffs towered above us. We reached the summit of West Peak just before sunset and spent the night in an unheated dormitory room of its monastery. The memory of Mr. Cheng helped inspire our ascent to all of the five flower-petal peaks of Hua, knowing that we would likely never see him again.



## MUSINGS

*Look at the means which a man employs,  
consider his motives, observe his pleasures.*

*A man simply cannot conceal himself!*

— Confucius —

*Mountains cannot be surmounted except by winding paths.*

— Johann Wolfgang von Goethe —

*A lonely impulse of delight drove to this tumult in the clouds.*

— William Butler Yeats —

## THE ABBOT'S SACRED SWORD



Spring floods had ravaged Wudang Mountain, washing away the roads and damaging small buildings in narrow ravines. The repairs on highways near the top of the mountain continued during our autumn visit. Consequently, vehicular traffic was not possible above Purple Cloud Temple. Lack of transportation did not stifle our quest to photograph more remote temples near the summit. The closures proved advantageous to us, as the sacred mountain was nearly devoid of tourists and pilgrims.

So we walked – much of the time off the normal beaten path – and found tiny altars inside remote caves at the end of ancient pathways. Eventually, we reached the temple built to honor Lao Tzu, who wrote the famous Taoist philosophical treatise, *Tao Te Ching*. A couple of pilgrims burned incense and prayed in front of the Lao Tzu statue. We had photographed most of the faded frescoes, tablets, and shrines when Mr. Liu, our national guide, walked up

with his cell phone pressed to his ear. His eyes were sparkling with anticipation.

The head nun of Purple Cloud Temple, Master Zheng, had called Mr. Liu to inform us that a rare Taoist ceremony was going to happen inside the Purple Cloud Pavilion. It was being held for a special contingent of visiting Taiwanese Taoists, who had made a pilgrimage to Wudang from their homeland. Mr. Liu asked if we would be interested in filming it. Abbot Li Guangfu (currently the National Chairman of the Chinese Taoist Association, then President of the Wudang Taoist Association) had given permission for us to do so. Astounded and ecstatic, we gleefully accepted the extraordinary invitation. The Taoist ceremony was scheduled for 2:00 p.m., and as it was nearly noon, we scurried down the slippery trails, hurrying to cover several miles back to our hotel to retrieve our video equipment.

Hot and sweaty from our rapid descent down the mountain, we climbed the stairs to our sixth-floor room where we quickly started gathering cameras, batteries, video tape, memory cards, and lens wipes and plugged our discharged batteries into the wall charger. We had barely changed into dry shirts when there was a light rapping at the door. We were surprised to find Master Zheng standing in the hallway. She had come to inform us that there was a car waiting out front to take us to Purple Cloud. (As she could not speak English, the hand signals we were forced to use with such a dignitary seemed a bit awkward.) We quickly packed and met her in the

lobby. She rode along with us and we parked next to a large, octagonal pond that was decorated with classical eight-trigram markings of Pa Kua. The turtles and koi fish that swam around lazily in the water somehow compensated for our anxious hustling.

Quickly, we climbed hundreds of steps up the stairs above the parking lot and reached the main courtyard shortly before two o'clock. Only then did we discover that the Taiwanese Taoist worshipers had been delayed due to road repairs and erratic bus service from Wudang Town. Mr. Liu advised us that the ceremony had been rescheduled for some later time, whenever they would actually arrive.

We waited in the courtyard, sitting by a wooden table, discussing camera preparations, potential shooting angles, and contingency plans for the dynamic situation. Mr. Liu had invited Master Zheng and Master Shi, the head monk of Purple Cloud, to join us. They arrived shortly, and much to our great surprise, they were accompanied by Abbot Li Guangfu. We rose from our seats, bowed respectfully to the revered master, and humbly expressed how





honored we were by his presence.

We confessed to Abbot Li that we were still struggling to understand the complex history of Wudang, Taoism, and martial arts legacy. We acknowledged our appreciation for details he had so graciously provided during the videotaped interview with him and our Shaolin Grandmaster, Sin Kwang Thé, only 10 months earlier.

With the assistance of Mr. Liu's excellent translation skills, we conveyed our uncertainty about various legends and myths. Abbot Li is famous for long explanations and stories. We were soon immersed in a conversation about Wudang martial arts history, especially Tai Chi. After Abbot Li's dissertation, we asked if there were other unique stories about Wudang Mountain that have special Taoist or martial significance.

Abbot Li looked straight into our eyes and spoke distinctly and sincerely. His reply to our question lasted several minutes. Somehow, his Mandarin Chinese words in Hubei dialect were revealed to Dennis. Abbot Li gestured with his hands as he described the mountain. In the beginning, the words of "Wudang" and "Zhang Sanfeng" (creator of Tai Chi), registered significantly in Dennis's mind. The abbot commanded more attention with "chien," (the Chinese word for a double-edged straight sword). He waved his hands and swung a virtual sword over the picnic table. Dennis's Chinese vocabulary was extremely limited, but somehow he understood as the abbot described the sword's magic power. Abbot Li nearly

came out of his seat, his eyes gleaming, as he cast the virtual sword into the air. He made marionette-style gestures, making the sword dance through the sky. Then he leaned toward Dennis's face with a penetrating gaze and held up six fingers. Turning his gaze toward his hand, he reached into the pocket of his blue cloak and brought out an imaginary key, then twisted it, as if unlocking a door.

For a moment we sat silent. We wondered, "What just happened?" Mr. Liu started to translate and was amazed when Dennis said he understood the abbot's story about the mountain being protected by a sword that flew through the air. Mr. Liu graciously added the fine details about the sacred sword of Wudang Mountain, explaining how precious it was and that it has been a closely guarded secret.

We were somewhat befuddled because we had just been honored and privileged to hear that secret story, personally told by one of the six key custodians. When we conveyed how impressed and captivated we were by the magic sword story, we emphasized the importance of this legend and wondered if we might ask permission to share the tale as part of our history project. After a very slight hesitation, Abbot Li serenely nodded and, much to our surprise, gave his permission.

The head monk, Master Shi, enhanced that episode a few months later. He was able to take photographs of a bronze replica of the sacred sword and mailed the pictures to our home in Colorado. But our personal search for the sacred sword would last another

11 years. We were ultimately able to discover the 120-pound bronze replica ourselves and photograph it. The tale of the sacred sword of Wudang is one of our favorite legends.

Very few Taoist monks and nuns know the sacred sword story. That legendary tale is chronicled in our book about Wudang history.



*Mystery creates wonder and wonder is the basis  
of man's desire to understand.*

– Neil Armstrong –

*When the sword is once drawn, the passions of men  
observe no bounds of moderation.*

– Alexander Hamilton –

*A sword, a spade, and a thought  
should never be allowed to rust.*

– James Stephens –

*Conquering evil, not the opponent,  
is the essence of swordsmanship.*

– Yagyu Munenori –

*Take the first step in faith.  
You don't have to see the whole staircase,  
just take the first step.*

– Martin Luther King –

*Above all, watch with glittering eyes  
the whole world around you,  
because the greatest secrets are always hidden  
in the most unlikely places.*

*Those who don't believe in magic will never find it.*

– Roald Dahl –

## TALE OF VICTORY



**G**u Shi Yi has been our friend for many years. The Gu family has lived near Wudang Mountain for generations. “Yi” was a name intentionally chosen by his father to mean fortitude, resolute, or victory. Thus, when he studied at Hubei University, Yi adopted “Victor” as his English name. We attest his name is well-deserved. Victor is the best English-speaking guide we have ever encountered in China.

After losing track of each other for a while (e-mail addresses changed), we were reunited in Shiyan City with Victor playing the role of local guide and martial arts historical expert of this region. Autumn breezes were refreshing after being cramped inside the small, black pickup truck that Victor had hired to transport us around the base of Wudang Mountain. This was our first full day of exploration since our arrival. Dump trucks and bulldozers were literally moving mountains to raise the Yuzhen Gong temples well above their former elevations. Victor described the heavy construction and massive effort to restore this historic complex, part of which burned down just before our

last visit. The Dangjiangkou Reservoir, which supplies water resources to the large Shiyan City industrial area, was being expanded. The temples were placed on new foundations far above the projected water level. Sadly, in 1959, when the reservoir was first constructed, the oldest Wudang Palace was not moved and it remains submerged.

After a brief photo session, we gathered our tripods and other camera gear and headed back to the truck. The driver waved at us, acknowledging our return. As we strolled across the wide dirt plateau, Victor inquired, “Do you remember the first time I met you?”



“Of course! That was nine years ago. You were working in the Shiyan City bookstore.”

“Yes. I taught English in the high school during the day and worked at the bookstore in the evening.” Victor added, “You asked me if there was a history book about Wudang in English. You were sad when I said, ‘No.’”

“And now? You have found one for us?”

“No. Such a book still does not exist,” Victor said, again noting our expressions of disappointment, “but if you come back next year, I will help you write one.”

It took a while for us to realize what a profound opportunity that would be. It was 18 months before we were able to return and we dedicated three weeks exclusively to Wudang research. That book, *Wudang Mountain Odyssey*, is the first-ever English-language history book about Taoist myths and legends of the ancient sacred mountain called Wudangshan.



*It is better to conquer yourself than to win a thousand battles.  
Then the victory is yours. It cannot be taken from you,  
not by angels or by demons, heaven or hell.*

– Buddha –

*If you know the enemy and you know yourself,  
your victory will not stand in doubt;  
if you know Heaven and you know Earth,  
you may make your victory complete.*

– Sun Tzu –

*Obstacles are necessary for success because  
victory comes only after many struggles  
and countless defeats.*

– Og Mandino –

*You win the victory when you yield to friends.*

– Sophocles –

*Some men see things as they are and ask why.  
Others dream things that never were and ask why not.*

– George Bernard Shaw –



## TALE OF THE PROFESSOR



The morning was cool with the promise of bright Colorado sunshine. The wilderness area near our home was the perfect escape for Professor Guowei Jian and his wife, Dr. Ye Zhu. As we walked along forest trails, ducking our heads to miss the occasional low-hanging pine branch, we watched closely for signs of native wildlife. Deer, elk, moose, squirrels, mountain lions, bears, foxes, and coyotes inhabit that territory, and we saw ample scat and footprints as evidence. But alas, the only creature we saw during the hike to the distant reservoir was a rabbit, stealthily frozen in its tracks, trying not to be seen. On the way back to our house, our guests confessed how much they missed the Rocky Mountains.

We became friends with Guowei and Ye while Guowei was a Communications Ph.D. candidate at the University of Colorado in Boulder. Anita, on assignment by a director of the Information

Technologies Department, assisted Guowei with research for his thesis. Ye Zhu was working on her medical degree. They both grew up and were educated in Beijing, China. Lifelong friends, they managed to further their educations in the States. After graduation, they married and now live in Ohio. Guowei is a professor at Cleveland State University and Ye is a doctor at the Cleveland Clinic.

The connection to Guowei through his university research is more than a coincidence to us – rather fortunate divine providence. As soon as he discovered our interest in China, he offered to help with our research. His enthusiasm was exemplified by generously volunteering to transcribe and translate, from Mandarin Chinese to English, five videotaped interviews of temple abbots. We were honored when Guowei and Ye accepted our offer to vacation in our home. They enjoyed the mountain retreat and provided details about their homeland.

We learned more about Chinese history while sharing expedition artifacts. From our photos, Guowei





explained poems written around doorways, scripted in ancient Chinese characters. Only trained scholars are able to read that ornate, antiquated calligraphy now. We shared artwork, which excited our guests, as they had only read about it and had never seen it in China. The panoramic painting, *Along the River During Qingming Festival*, by Zhang Zeduan, depicts rural and urban life during the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127 A.D.). Our full-sized reproduction of that 12<sup>th</sup>-century scroll is 12 inches tall and 18 feet long.



Merging Chinese history with English narration has been extremely difficult for us. But again, Guowei came to our rescue. Correct pronunciation of Chinese names and terms remained an issue. Guowei offered a simple solution: He recorded voice-over narrations for all of the necessary abbot dialogue segments.

To have such exceptionally talented and generous friends is a great blessing. We wonder if the

communication students at Cleveland State realize that Professor Guowei Jian's gifts and interests span a wide spectrum: from rabbits to abbots.



## MUSINGS

*The only way to have a friend is to be one.*

– Ralph Waldo Emerson –

*Great acts are made up of small deeds.*

– Lao Tzu –

*The purpose of human life is to serve,  
and to show compassion,  
and the will to help others.*

– Albert Schweitzer –

*The best way to find yourself is  
to lose yourself in the service of others.*

– Mahatma Gandhi –

*Always render more and better service  
than is expected of you,  
no matter what your task may be.*

– Og Mandino –

*Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed  
by the things that you didn't do  
than by the ones you did do.  
So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor.  
Catch the trade winds in your sails.  
Explore. Dream. Discover.*

– Mark Twain –

## FIVE DRAGON PALACE



The sign read, “Five Dragon Palace – 7.5 km.” We could easily make that 4.7-mile hike in a few hours and be back to our little hotel on the upper plateau of Wudang Mountain by suppertime. So we thought. Unfortunately, later review of our GPS satellite track revealed that it was more than 10 miles from our hotel to the palace!

Five Dragon Palace is the oldest remaining temple on Wudang Mountain. The palace was originally built during the Tang Dynasty (618-907 A.D.) and the temple complex was greatly expanded in 1412. By the end of the Ming Dynasty in 1644 there were hundreds of separate structures. Tragically, a fire consumed a large portion of the complex in 1930. Reconstruction of this very remote palace has been a daunting task for the regional monks, and much of it remains in ruin.

Just after sunrise, on the day of our hike, our Taoist monk friend, Gu Shi Yi (whose chosen name is “Victor”) guided us along secluded, muddy paths known only to some of the local temple monks.

Although the forest paths were steep and slippery, we found marvelous locations to capture pictures of famous Wudang Mountain temples from uncommon, dramatic angles. When we arrived at the sign marking the trail to Five Dragon Palace, Victor pointed downhill and said, “Follow this path into the depths of the valley. Eventually, you’ll find a large stairway that will take you up to the plateau where you will find the Five Dragon monastery. I’ll have my cell phone with me if you need anything.” The anomaly of the incorrect distance marker was about to be revealed.

Fortunately, the trail beyond the sign was newly paved with narrow sidewalks and irregular steps that ran through the fertile landscape and occasionally crisscrossed the turbulent cascades of the river valley. The winding path led down the mountain to the dam on Five Dragon River that forms Tian Yi Lake, directly below both Soaring Cliff and the Hanging Cliff / South Crag Temple.

As we hiked, the scenery enveloped us in serenity.





Striking lush, green foliage was sprinkled with colorful springtime blossoms. Occasionally, wild songbirds would flit about in the bushes or careen overhead, chirping delicate songs. The smell of the dense shrubbery varied – sometimes dank and musty or sporadically fragrant with light floral scents when we passed by flowering bushes. Slender, steep, rapid waterfalls darted under wooden-plank walkways suspended over rock ledges. The forest canopy filtered diffuse rays of sunlight that sometimes refracted into brief, spontaneous rainbows when we walked through fine mist in the narrow canyons. A soft gust of wind would immediately make them disappear and offer us some relief from the warm, humid air. Tranquility surrounded us.

After a brief noon snack by Tian Yi Lake, we started asking other hikers, who we rarely encountered, to estimate the remaining distance to the palace. The old maintenance man with a shovel and wheelbarrow near the dam told us that it was only one more kilometer. A half-hour later, a small group led by an English-speaking guide told us it was eight kilometers away. After another hour, we passed ramshackle tarp tents used by electrical construction workers where another lady told us it was 20 more kilometers! We began to worry.

Six and a half hours after leaving Victor, we finally found the stairway he had mentioned. A newly built, wide staircase turned sharply left off the river path. The textured concrete steps were fairly uniform, about eight inches tall, with varying depth, dependent on the

slope of the terrain that was usually very steep. It took us another hour to climb more than 2,000 steps that zigzagged across the face of the mountain and out of the valley before we reached the winding dirt road to the palace ruins.



With weary legs and heartfelt anticipation, we followed the road around the corner of a small hill. The view was worth all of our effort! The ancient temple site was captivating. On the plateau, a soft breeze cooled our sweat-drenched clothes. For a while, we focused only on camera angles, aperture settings, and shutter speeds. The ancient building complex, tattered by time and weather, begged to be explored. Its age was mournfully sketched on every square inch of its mottled, reddish brown, crumbling wall structures and decaying roof tiles. Some of the kiln-dried bricks had been embroidered over time by thick, green vines. Nearing the east entrance, we saw a traditional cubical stone gate with an arched doorway, beckoning new visitors into antiquity. Steel



girders had recently been placed inside the archway to reinforce the fractured mortar edifice.

We wandered about freely for a long time before we came to an occupied structure. When we entered that small outlying temple, the reality of physical strain, time, and dehydration finally struck. A young monk was sitting at a small wooden desk on the right side of the doorway. Straight ahead, there was a wooden kneeling bench, an iron incense urn, and several ornate bronze statues. The monk was intently studying his religious scripture scrolls. After several moments, he looked up. His eyes grew wide with astonishment and he immediately offered a fresh container of bottled water, as if to say, “You look ragged and thirsty.” After we thanked him sincerely, he struggled with broken pidgin English to ask if he might somehow be of assistance. With the help of a pocket digital translator, we soon discovered that there was only sparse vehicle transportation service for Five Dragon Palace. It was 5 p.m.

As the palace grounds were extraordinarily large, with a huge temple at the opposite end of the courtyard, we regrouped to take advantage of photographic opportunities with the remaining light of day. But, we quickly grew apprehensive about being able to return to our hotel, with limited water, aching feet, throbbing knees, small flashlights, and three granola bars in our possession. Then a small van pulled into the courtyard and unloaded six local tourists, perhaps dignitaries. As they took pictures, the helpful, young monk was able to communicate our

need to the van driver. Unfortunately, there was no room for us in his vehicle. But he called a friend who was enticed, for a fee, to drive up from town and get us, on the officially closed, under-construction road. It would only take an hour for him to arrive.

When we finally arrived at the bottom of Wudang Mountain in that God-sent car, we discovered that the tour buses, which could have taken us back to our hotel, had stopped running a half-hour earlier. We asked the rescue driver to take us to a hotel, near the tour bus terminal. No, our U.S. credit cards were not accepted. Cash only. But the rooms had western-style toilets, hot showers, and comfortable beds. Mountain survival at its finest! We crashed.

The next morning, Victor was outwardly amused by our arduous adventure. He gladly helped us obtain a stranded-tourist discount bus fare to transport us back to our hotel on top of the mountain.

Would we do it again? You bet!



*Perseverance is not a long race;  
it is many short races one after the other.*

— Walter Elliot —

*Patience and perseverance have a magical effect  
before which difficulties disappear and obstacles vanish.*

— John Quincy Adams —

*Perseverance is the foundation of all actions.*

— Lao Tzu —

*Do or do not... there is no try.*

— Yoda —

## YAK BUTTER TEA



**I**t was a two-hour bus ride from Gonggar airport through rocky hills on narrow two-lane roads to Lhasa, Tibet. The terrain resembled the mountain tundra commonly found along the Continental Divide in Colorado. Herds of sheep and goats were common. Large pastures had herds of yak grazing on lush, green grass. Mountain streams meandered across the fertile valleys. The plateau elevation was almost 12,000 feet above sea level.

When we arrived at our quaint little hotel near the center of Lhasa, we were honored by a welcoming ceremony and given prayer scarves and yak butter tea. (The yak is a major economic asset for Tibetans, providing not only milk made into tea but also wool for clothing, rope, and blankets. Non-edible yak products are used to make candles and other commodities.) After dinner, in the parking lot of our hotel, our entire tour group practiced the various martial arts forms we were to perform on the trip.

Adapting to high altitude was more difficult than we had imagined. Despite training and living in the Colorado Rocky Mountains, many in our tour group, including Grandmaster Thé and Anita, succumbed to the headaches, chest pains, and breathing difficulties of high-altitude sickness. By the second morning, Anita's symptoms were severe – more than just dehydration and more pain than aspirin from our first-aid kits could control.

Insufficient oxygen carried in the bloodstream is the cause for this kind of distress. The period of time for a person's metabolism to adapt varies greatly. But fortunately, the hotel provided an herbal remedy, for in each room was a package of high-altitude-sickness tea. A pot of that tea slowly restored Anita's vitality within a few hours. However, a search of local food stores, tea shops, and even a neighborhood Tibetan medical clinic did not produce any additional sources of this seemingly magical tea. (We have since discovered sources on the Internet for products like Clear Lung and Altitude Adjustment capsules that may offer oxygen enrichment in preparation for future high-altitude adventures.)

Having recovered from the rarified atmosphere disease, we spent the next day and a half exploring Lhasa. A visit to the Potala Palace was the pinnacle achievement. The libraries of ancient religious scrolls were intriguing and the gold sarcophaguses containing the remains of past Dalai Lamas were awe-inspiring.

Across the main boulevard, in front of the Potala Palace, there was a large city park square that allowed

an unobstructed view of the hilltop citadel. Surprised by how vacant the park was, we spontaneously videotaped our Tai Chi Iron Fan form while dressed in our kung fu uniforms. At the far end of the square, we discovered a dirt path that led up onto a knoll. An ornamental stupa – a white stone obelisk capped with a gold knob – sat prominently at the peak of the hill. There was a crude patio next to the stupa, that provided an opportune vantage point from which to photograph the majestic Potala Palace. Since this was before the advent of digital photography, we used



an entire roll of slide film, posed in our martial arts uniforms, and captured the magnificent view from the hilltop.

Later, several small tour buses transported our tour group to events like the dinner theater at the Crazy



Yak restaurant. That unique dining experience allowed us to sample savory Tibetan cuisine, such as yak stew, and local vegetables. Following the meal, we were entertained by traditional Himalayan tribal folk dancing that included yak-style costumes and drum-accompanied choreography with performers dressed as yeti – the abominable snowmen.

In those days there were very few motor vehicles in Lhasa, so we utilized tricycle pedicabs for personal adventures. A fringed canopy covered the rear compartment of the tricycle (barely wide enough for two western posteriors), behind the strong, lean pedicab driver. Despite the hard wooden seat and no shock absorbing springs, it was a fun way to travel through city streets. We were able to shop downtown at the open-air bazaar and found some wonderful brass bells with marvelous ring tones, plus other small tourist treasures. Juggling our souvenirs and cameras in a pedicab back to the hotel was a comical sight for local pedestrians.

The Tibetan people are energetic and handsome, with high cheekbones, solar-glazed skin, and broad smiles. Living among them for just a few days was an awesome experience.



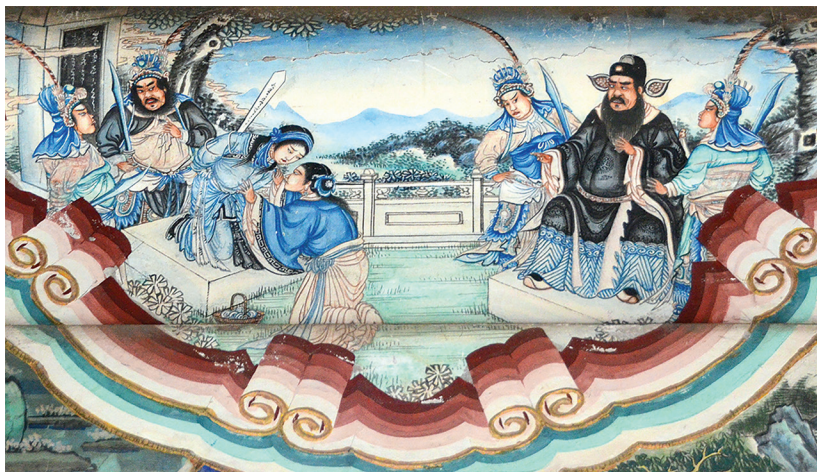
## MUSINGS

*Don't walk behind me; I may not lead.  
Don't walk in front of me; I may not follow.  
Just walk beside me and be my friend.*

– Albert Camus –



## ENTWINED SOULS



Isn't it curious how many new faces one sees at a shopping mall or grocery store, even frequently visited establishments? How could you possibly remember all those faces – thousands of them every year – that you'll never see again? Paths we travel are constantly crossed by other footprints, which the wind usually blows away like fine dust. The memories are discarded as insignificant and trivial. The majority do not affect our trajectory or personal vector through life.

Yet there are some people who constantly bump into us, like leaves floating through the same current of a river. Rare, rich, entwined leaf movement can form a special bond, called a spouse. Other leaves, floating nearby on the water, become familiar and we eventually recognize their touch, their texture, their faces, their souls. These we call friends – sometimes lifelong friends. River currents may separate some soul leaves for long periods of time, but at each

reunion, it seems that only moments have passed. Relationships with such souls seem to continue right where they left off. Connectivity is timeless.

Our quest to explore sacred mountains is rather devoid of a time dimension. Our journey to document thousands of years of martial arts history has lasted more than a quarter-century but seems brief. Far back upstream, we had computer science jobs, both working at a facility in the not-so-safe part of the city. A conscious need for exercise to compensate for desk jobs, combined with a thought toward self-defense training, led us to a local Shaolin Kung Fu school. We signed up for one month to test the water. Twenty-five years later, we are still onboard as students, practitioners, and witnesses for diligent perseverance. Many voyagers, whose souls are now closely entwined with our quest, are mentioned in these short stories. It's important to honor their significance.

Our Colorado kung fu instructors, David and Sharon Soard, have patiently guided us through thousands of hours of intense martial training. They have taught us to apply kung fu principles and philosophies to other aspects of our lives. Exercise and training in their school has kept us healthy, and we have become connected through the scores of forms we've learned, some with auspicious names like "Entwine the Dragon Staff."

Our Shaolin Grandmaster, Sin Kwang Thé, has a gigantic repertoire of kung fu styles and forms – more material than we could learn in our lifetimes. When we approached him about the concept of using new

digital photography and videography to preserve remnants of kung fu history held by aging temple abbots and monks, he responded, “If you go, I am going with you.” We understood that to mean, “Yes.”

Besides the Soards and Grandmaster Thé, there were fellow kung fu students who volunteered to help with the project and serve as film crew members on the first major expedition: Karl Glaser, John Turner, Pat and Sandy Smith, Chuck Lawhead, and Hai Tran – all black belts at our school, at the time.



When we returned from that expedition, we contacted Digital Globe, a local Colorado company that provides satellite imagery for businesses like Google Earth. Back then, the latitude/longitude coordinates that we had recorded at the various temples were uncharted territory. But Digital Globe was fascinated enough by our fledgling project that they offered to task their QuickBird satellite to take pictures from a 450 km (280 mile)-high orbit above

the earth. It took two years to see their first space photos of Songshan and another three years before images of Wudangshan were available.

To most people, this voyage is nothing like a luxury cruise. But since kung fu literally means “time, energy, and effort,” our martial arts training has been the perfect discipline for such an adventure. It has taught us tenacity and perseverance. If it was easy, it would have already been done by someone else. But if not us, then who? If not now, then when? We are intertwined with a unique set of souls to make something special possible.



*A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.*

– Lao Tzu –

*What you do today can improve all your tomorrows.*

– Ralph Marston –

*Tomorrow hopes we have learned something from yesterday.*

– John Wayne –

*Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.*

– Hebrews 12:1 –

*The sweetest thing in all my life has been the longing  
to reach the Mountain, to find the place*

*where all the beauty came from – my country,*

*the place where I ought to have been born.*

*For indeed it now feels not like going, but like going back.*

– C.S. Lewis –

*Blessed are the legend-makers with their rhyme  
of things not found within recorded time.*

– J.R.R. Tolkien –



## GUARDIAN ANGELS



Our guardian angels were surely working overtime, providing protection on a long trip to a remote area of central China. We had just finished a cultural, social, and martial arts exchange between our group of touring kung fu students and several Wudang Mountain martial artist schools.

The 10-hour overnight train trip in “hard seat”-class coaches, with soiled, triple-decker wooden bunks and only open windows for limited cooling, was far from restful. When we finally arrived in Wuhan, we toured local museums and temples and were mesmerized by a musical performance of ancient bronze bells. The



end-of-June heat and humidity of that city surrounded by large rivers was stifling. But the Chinese weather gods took pity on





us. About noon, while we were visiting the famous Yellow Crane Pagoda, it started to rain.

We arrived at our hotel at about 2:30 in the afternoon. Our priority was to wash all our clothes. During our time in the mountains, we had collected a lot of dirt and sweat. The water in the hotel room bathtub revealed the murky evidence. We hung laundry from parachute cord tied between the curtain rods and air conditioner vents and hoped it would dry by morning. With some time to relax and refresh, we were soon ready to discover Wuhan nightlife.

Excitement was high, as that evening would offer our first opportunity to see a great Beijing Opera performance – classical Chinese stage art. Rumors were abundant in our group about the skill of such actors and dancers. Many opera performers train from childhood to perfect their craft. Jackie Chan is perhaps the most famous such child prodigy.

Buses were scheduled to take us to the dinner theater and leave the hotel parking lot promptly at 5:30 p.m. We boarded the bus at least five minutes early. The bus slowly began to fill with other kung fu students and local tour guides.

Just after the appointed time of departure, we waited for stragglers, as there were still empty seats on our bus. One of our senior instructors, Master

Sharon Soard, stepped through the bus door looking for us. She asked if we had our iron fan martial arts weapons with us. We said that we did not, that they were in our room. She said that Grandmaster Thé was just informed of a request to have his students perform on stage later. Would we like to do the Tai Chi Iron Fan form? Indeed, yes! We said that we'd be honored, but we had to return to our room and get them.

With chi-energy coursing through our veins and butterflies in our stomachs, we ran up the stairs to our room on the third floor – the elevator being broken – only to find that our electronic key card would not open the door. We tried again. We were at the right room; the card worked when we arrived, but the door stayed locked. A maid in the hallway tried to open it with her passkey, but the door would not open for her either. We rushed down to the front desk of the hotel. The desk clerk manager spoke some English, so we explained our situation. He asked if we wanted a different room? No! Our luggage is in that room, and we need to get some things for the evening. We cannot open the door! He checked our key card. It seemed to be set up correctly and should function. Regardless, he went upstairs with us, bringing his master room key. Surely that would work.

Meanwhile, the bus was waiting. It was almost 5:45. We were late, delaying the trip to the theater. The manager put his master key in the door lock. It would not open! He repeatedly tried to open the electronic lock. No luck.

Turning away from the room door, our slow trot

to the bus showed our disappointment. We realized the loss of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and accepted that we must return to the bus empty-handed. Finding our instructors, we apologized profusely. We would not be able to perform, as our grandmaster had requested.

The Wuhan Hall of Beijing Opera that evening was to showcase a legendary character – one dear to our hearts and renowned in Chinese folklore – the Monkey King. The show was being broadcast on Chinese national television. To date, it was the best Beijing Opera performance we have ever seen. Vastly tall, red velvet curtains hung along the front, hiding the stage. Bright yellow, purple, green, and red colors highlighted the elegant décor of the room. Above the stage, there was a large banner hung over the curtains that read, “Welcome U.S. Martial Artists,” in English and Chinese.

Being a dinner theater, round tables were arranged in a large semicircle around the stage, terraced on several elevated mezzanines. Chinese tableware filled our vision: chopsticks, quaint teapots, dainty teacups, ornate napkins, all properly placed around a central meal-service turntable. Before long, the restaurant filled to capacity. Smoking was allowed, so local Chinese patrons indulged themselves. The feeble air conditioning of the restaurant was insufficient to handle the hot, smoke-filled air of the crowded room.

After dinner, our students were the preliminary attraction on stage before the opera performance. When the great velvet curtains opened, our school’s

best students were introduced by our grandmaster, speaking in Mandarin Chinese. The audience saw enthusiastic spirit and focused energy as the students demonstrated their favorite Chinese Shaolin Kung Fu forms. A nine-section steel chain whip flew in defiance of the confined space on stage. Then came the drunken-style broadsword and spear forms and finally a Hsing-I two-person fighting set. The audience rose with appreciative applause for these foreigners who shared their love of historical martial arts from China.

At the conclusion of the U.S. kung fu performance, the Beijing Opera began. A classical oriental-instrument orchestra pierced the dull room chatter with sounds from hardwood clappers, brass gongs, zithers, cymbals, drums, and stringed instruments that reverberated loudly through the great hall. When the red velvet curtains were pulled back again, dancers leapt across the stage, vaulting and spinning to the rhythm of the music. All the actors wore colorful costumes. Some had great heavy robes. Others were adorned with bird feathers or masks of intricate colors. Some had staffs or swords or spears or other weapons. Applause rose as Sun Wukong, the Monkey King, appeared on stage. Then Jade Emperor of the Azure Vault of Heaven and other characters joined the throng in dance and acrobatics. Their operatic singing filled our ears with high-pitched tones, chanting, and chorus as the



actors played out the intricately choreographed story. The rambunctious and mischievous Monkey King catapulted from one end of the stage to the other, leaped high into the air, then summersaulted between the feet of some potential captor to escape the opponent's grasp. Spears darted back and forth. Mock sword fights and weapon juggling filled the stage. The show finished with a clash of cymbals from the orchestra and a standing ovation from the audience.

It was after 11 p.m. when we found the tour buses several blocks from the theater. The night air was still hot and humid. When we arrived at the hotel, we were again concerned about the door lock for our room. We wondered if we should seek help from the hotel manager again. No one was at the front desk, but the elevator had been fixed. So we rode in the small, packed elevator with our friends to our floor. Hesitantly, we took our electronic key card and slid it into the slot above the door knob. The long, arduous day's events greatly amplified our amazement when the door opened immediately.

The next morning, the hotel manager was unable to explain the door lock situation, as no repair had been ordered. We have surmised that angels kept the door locked or held the door shut. Perhaps the guardian angels that had protected us during our trip to the remote mountains had decided that some of us should not be on Chinese national television. Since our tour itinerary was known and our group was being escorted or followed everywhere we went by other people, officials or not, a greater wisdom seemed to



intervene to ensure our safety, that night, and on the rest of the trip. As we all know, kidnapping has been a worldwide issue since the dawn of time. Sometimes, the best security is to live “below the radar.”

We have come to believe that the situation surrounding our iron fans was more of a miracle than a tragedy. Sometimes circumstances evolve that ultimately protect us from danger. Coincidences are events where God can choose to remain anonymous.



*By three methods we may learn wisdom:  
First, by reflection, which is noblest;  
Second, by imitation, which is easiest;  
and Third, by experience, which is the bitterest.*  
– Confucius –

*Few are those who see with their own eyes  
and feel with their own hearts.*  
– Albert Einstein –

*The thorn defends the rose.  
It harms only those who would  
steal the blossom from the plant.*  
– Master Kan / Kung Fu TV series –

*If you fight a battle with love, you will conquer.  
In defense, you will be impenetrable.  
Heaven protects and guards  
those who live the principle of love.*  
– Lao Tzu –

*It is never too late to be what you might have been.*  
– George Eliot –

## RIBBONS OF STEEL



Much has changed with train travel in China over the last 20 years. Gone now are steam locomotives hauling freight through complex tangles of tracks in rail yards, chugging up grades with heavy loads, belching plumes of smoke, and announcing maneuvers with a shrill steam whistle. Today, ultra-sleek bullet trains race along ribbon rails with smooth, welded joints that eliminate the old, familiar clickity-clack noise so common with bolted-track joints of the steam era.

On a hazy day 20 years ago, our passenger train had pulled onto a siding so another train could pass. On our starboard side was a large, green field extending half a mile to a fence line with short trees and shrubs. In the distance were several small, single-story farmhouses, constructed of common red-clay bricks with tile roofs. The rolling rural landscape stretched to the northeast horizon. Of significant interest, just outside our railway coach window, stood an ox in a

muddy puddle of irrigation water at the edge of the railroad berm. The attending farmer and his family smiled up at us. We managed to slide the coach window up in its wooden frame. The limited cool air of the air-conditioned coach was quickly replaced by stifling hot and humid air from the open rice paddies and pastures. Numerous cameras were quickly extended across the crowded windowsill. As the water buffalo obviously chewed its cud, we waved and exchanged greetings, *Ni hao* (“hello” in Mandarin), across the ditch. The family seemed quite proud of their single water buffalo and plow, striking numerous poses to entertain the foreign travelers. The big beast of burden seemed glad to rest for a while. Plowed furrows stretched back to the distant tree line. A high-speed freight train rushed past us on the opposite side of our coach, jostling our train car with a concussive wake of air. The instant it was clear, our train leapt forward, leaving the water buffalo and farmers



quickly behind. No doubt they had an adventure of their own to share with neighbors after dinner that evening.

Our group occupied an entire coach car. Our luggage was stored on overhead metal racks, as there was little or no room under the soft lounge-chair seats. Long distances between train stations provided opportunities for young railway stewardesses, in cute caps and jackets, to saunter through the coach aisles with push carts filled with soda pop, hot tea, crackers, snacks, dried noodle soup canisters, and even decks of playing cards. The latter were inexpensive, delightful souvenirs. The normal 52-card decks were decorated with old Chinese etchings of scenes from classical drawings by ancient artists. We were extremely impressed by the detail and craftsmanship of the picturesque collections.

The train served numerous cities and towns during the 10-hour journey from Wuhan to Shiyan City, in Hubei Province. We stopped at several stations that were surrounded by freight-yard mazes. As the train slowly traversed the rail switches connecting the mainline to a passenger terminal track, it was then common to see steam locomotives pulling freight trains. Most of those coal-fired engines had a 2-8-2 wheel configuration, like the old American Mikado-class locomotives. They had two small guide wheels on the pilot truck, eight large wheels driven by two steam pistons under the boiler, and two small idler wheels on the trailing truck to support the heavy firebox and crew cab.



We embraced a sense of nostalgia watching the steel steam giants lumber about the rail yards. Every town that was inhabited by them had the obligatory round water towers and square coal towers to feed their steam boiler mechanisms. Coal ash blackened the rock ballast between the rails and wooden ties. Close encounters with several behemoths allowed us to hear the blasts and gasps of their steam ejectors and pressure-relief valves, the clatter of their feed water-heater pumps, and even the occasional shrill, echoing steam whistle. And if you were downwind from them, all windows had to be closed on the coach car, lest it be filled with smoke.

The electric locomotive, which pulled our passenger train, used roof-mounted pantograph contacts that draw current from catenary electric power lines above the track. At midday, we rotated in small groups to the dining car. That was our first taste of curry-flavored fish. While some disliked it, most thought it was quite delicious.

Eventually, the iron rail yards, open plains, and farmland north of Wuhan morphed into the hill



country of the Wudang Mountain Range. Ultimately, the train twisted and slowed as it passed through river canyons and crawled up the steep grades of the higher, rugged terrain. Precipitous cliffs rose up on one side and fell away into the river on the other. The view from the serpentine-twisted route frequently revealed huge gardens terraced into steep embankments. Noticeably distant from any houses, farms, or villages, the remote, giant stair-cased fields were actively tended by peasant workers, who wore round, straw coolie hats.

The train depot in Shiyan City, at the base of Wudang Mountain, has made a remarkable transformation during the last two decades. Once it was merely a place to unload passengers onto the bare rock ballast next to the railroad ties, devoid of any amenities – not even an electric light pole. It was most disconcerting to disembark during the night. Our small flashlights would provide marginal illumination during the two-minute interval for the scheduled train stop. The mandatory schedule dictated that the train depart after exactly two minutes, without regard for passenger comfort or need. This demanded expediency from travelers, no matter how many or how few. After surviving that train dismount, it was necessary to trudge along muddy roads toward the muted lights of Shiyan City and wait on the fringe outskirts of town for food and bus services to open after dawn.

One time, we traveled on an overnight train from Shiyan City to Wuhan in a “hard-seat” sleeper coach.

That car had triple-decker wooden bunks and no separate compartments inside the coach. There were about 20 triple bunks per car, thus accommodating 60 people. Nearly exhausted from a long day of kung fu performances and mountain climbing, we cringed at the sight of the old, thin mattresses and soiled linens. We overcame our dread and slept on our backs wearing long sleeved shirts and made efforts to not roll over during the night. There was no air conditioning in hard-seat coaches, so even with the windows open, restful sleep was not possible. Some of our group paced the single aisle, unable to sleep at all. They served as a kind of roving patrol, which was the only form of security for our group and luggage. Chinese passengers from other cars on the train walked in the narrow aisleway, past the end of our open-aired bunks. Sometimes, they sat on small stools near the windows.

Eventually, the traveling public demanded improvements. Initially, a small, tin-roofed passenger platform was built at Shiyan City and was soon replaced by a modest train station with bench seats inside. Tickets were actually sold at the station, which was a significant convenience. After completing our third trip to Wudang, we planned another overnight train trip back to Wuhan from that improved facility.

The Shiyan City ticket agent was a heavy-set, gruff woman with graying hair. She strictly enforced station regulations during her watch. She scolded passengers who did not obey her rules of order, sequence, and protocol. No one was allowed to cut in line. She won

any and all arguments. We arrived more than an hour prior to the train's scheduled departure and quietly occupied a corner near a window. The station slowly filled with scores of passengers trying to book passage on that train. Since we had purchased our train tickets in town, we did not interact with the chief matron until the train arrived at the station, after 10 p.m.

It was just the two of us on that guided trip, so we each carried a 30-pound backpack, a 40-pound wheeled suitcase, and a 10-pound soft-sided travel case, containing all of our camera gear, clothes, and other equipment. From the counter where we presented our ticket to board the train, there were four flights of stairs to climb up to the loading platform. It had been a long day, and we were tired. The precise schedule allowed the train to stop for only five minutes. We were near the end of the line of passengers, the only foreigners. To our surprise, the strict matron ticket agent noticed how Anita was struggling with her suitcases. The agent commanded another attendant to handle ticket collection and quickly came to Anita's aid. The matron took the large suitcase and carried it all the way to the top of the stairs and made sure that we got onto the right coach. She seemed very pleased to help us, and we were so happy for her assistance. She was smiling as she walked back down the stairs to her station. The coach to which we had been directed was a steel sleeper car with private, lockable compartments, each having two pairs of bunk beds separated by a central aisle and a small table against the window. Mr. Liu, our national

guide, was able to join us in the compartment for the journey. One bunk was completely filled by our heavy luggage. We slept soundly for more than six hours.

Back then, the lavatory (WC/water closet) facilities were quaintly designed with a wide slot in the floor of a tiny room at the end of a coach, through which one could see the railroad ties zip past underneath the train. Sometimes, there was not even a grimy handle inside the WC to grip for balance. With the advent of bullet train travel, railroad lavatory facilities finally offered some western-style toilets.



Our first trip on a bullet train was an express from Beijing, nonstop to Qufu, the ancestral home of Confucius. We marveled at the speed indicators, which were above the doors in every car. We were pleasantly surprised at how smooth and quiet the ride remained when the sign read 300 km/hr (186 miles per hour). The territory outside those train windows whizzed passed in a blur that seemed almost magical. Comfortable high-back seats allowed us to enjoy the rich variety of China's landscape. Large urban city

scenes would quickly transform into lush green fields or small rural towns or rugged mountains.

Our last bullet train trip was from Wuhan to Shanghai. It was a sleeper compartment with four beds, but six people were assigned to the compartment for a daytime journey. We sat on the edges of the lower bunk beds and put our luggage on the top bunks. After 10 hours, as we neared our destination, we instigated a casual cultural exchange with the three Chinese passengers (none of whom spoke English) who sat across from us. We offered them some of our M&Ms chocolate candies. The response from the young, married woman amused us. She chattered with her husband, who was not sure if he liked the taste of the M&Ms. She responded by offering us a sample of her favorite snack – a nicely packaged, cellophane-wrapped chicken foot!

China's ribbons of steel have provided interesting adventures in the past. The current vast network of high-speed passenger trains allows travelers to comfortably enjoy great expanses of territory in a short amount of time. Station attendants, conductors, and stewardesses have given us good experiences when we have traveled by rail. And train schedules are available on the Internet, in English, so planning an itinerary is convenient.



## MUSINGS

*Even if you're on the right track,  
you'll get run over if you just sit there.*

– Will Rogers –



## ABANDONED, BY GEORGE



It was especially dark that morning at four o'clock. There was no moon. The sky seemed overcast, but it was hard to tell. Faint city lights were trapped on the street outside the hotel. Our time to explore the Shaolin Temple was preciously limited. Our goal that morning was to climb several miles above the monastery to Damo's cave and be there in time to photograph the sunrise over Song Mountain. With copious amounts of camera gear, we waited in the front lobby for George, our local guide. He was late. Neither George nor the hired driver of the minivan seemed pleased to chauffeur us around Dengfeng so early in the morning. After all, it was November, and dawn would not arrive until 6:50 a.m. We had only arrived the previous afternoon, spending what was left of that day taking pictures in the Pagoda Forest graveyard and around the nearly deserted temples inside the walls of the famous monastery.

While we discussed suitable camera lenses,

f-stops, and mountain climbing tactics in the back seat, George and the driver were in the front seat quibbling in Mandarin about something unpleasant. In short order, George announced that we had arrived. He quickly opened the sliding passenger door and ushered us out of the van. There were no streetlights. As we gathered our backpacks that held our daily photo trek gear and stepped onto a cobblestone patio, the only available light came from the headlights of the van, which illuminated the nearby shrubbery.

George told us the path to Damo's cave was to our left. Then he promptly departed. We felt a bit perturbed as we watched the taillights disappear into the humid haze around the street corner. Where were we? Where did we need to go? Was left the correct way to go? We were confused and felt abandoned.

Our small flashlights quickly emerged from our pockets. As this was long before nice concrete sidewalks and tourist-direction signs were installed at the Shaolin Temple, going "left," per George's instructions, meant stepping off the patio onto a dirt path that seemed to go uphill. The moonless morning mist hung around our shoulders like an old stale blanket stuck to a pillow. The slope of the ground was our only clue. We followed the incline to ascend the mountain. The fact that we did not bring a compass was remedied on future expeditions. Without a mountain-shaped shadow on the horizon or stars by which to navigate, we were quickly baffled by the maze of thin trails under our feet.

The meager dirt path, initially chosen for its

suggestive incline, disappeared after a hundred yards, abruptly ending against a dirt embankment. It didn't look too tall. Surely the pathway to Damo's cave was just above us. Gripping large roots dangling from the clay soil, we climbed. With hands, shoes, elbows, and shins consequently stained with dirt by the muddy cliff, we discovered that there was indeed another path on top of the little ridge – along the edge of a cornfield. Traversing the corn, we soon found rice paddies. Then there was more corn – with stalks even taller than the last. Remorsefully acknowledging our errors in navigation provided little comfort in the thick, still air that tried to smother us with the heavy stench of mildewed leaves, dank earth, and rotting vegetation.

Three feet beyond the last row of corn, we literally bumped into the attending farmer's small house. No lights in or around the cabin alerted us before we touched the clay-brick siding. Whispers from within the house confirmed that the residents had heard and glimpsed our ghostly figures outside. (It was probably fortunate that Chinese farmers did not have shotguns.) Despite the dark gray sky's effort, dawn's dim glow barely allowed us to gracefully extricate ourselves from that embarrassing situation. A rooster crowed in the pen on the back side of the farm house. Turning sharply uphill past the chicken coop, we maneuvered across a plowed field toward the faintly visible structures surrounding Damo's cave on the hilltop.

We had scarcely ascended the first long flight of stair steps that went 200 yards straight up the steep

hillside, when rays of sunshine peeked over Song Mountain. Attending nuns who maintained Damo's sacred cave shrine walked swiftly past us during our first photo session. We climbed another 30 minutes before reaching the sanctuary archway to finish the morning mission.

Later, our national guide questioned George's early morning treatment of us. George was immune to any critique. After all, the team did ultimately accomplish its mission to photograph Damo's cave. The farmer had not interfered. The goats on the stair steps willingly posed as ornaments for sunrise



photos. And the cave mission was completed in sufficient time to interview the abbot that afternoon.

After all, that was why our delegation of 10 black belts had traveled with Grandmaster Sin Kwang Thé to Song Mountain in the first place. We had been granted an audience with Shi Yongxin, head abbot of the original Shaolin Temple in Henan Province – a very rare privilege. Fortunately, we had worked very hard together for 18 months, preparing our meager film crew for that event. The team of amateur photographers brought seven video cameras, 15 slide-film and digital still cameras, microphones, cables, audio recorders, and two laptop computers. We

transported more than 700 pieces of equipment for a four-mountain research project. We had practiced rapid-setup drills whereby we could take all the necessary equipment from our field packs and be ready to record in less than two minutes. That training proved especially valuable. The abbot's staff barely allowed us two minutes after we entered the formal reception hall before the venerable abbot arrived.

Diligence and effort were keys to success. An ounce of George's neglect turned into a pound of respect from the abbot. Disdain gave way to humility, which then produced esteem. Toil and stumbling became achievement and accomplishment. Without George's involvement, the blossoming of the day's events would have been less rich and colorful. Through striking contrast, we found exhilaration. When we eat bitter, the taste of sweet is more intense. We count our blessings.



***Your attitude toward failure determines  
your altitude after failure.***

– John C. Maxwell –

***It is the dim haze of mystery  
that adds enchantment to pursuit.***

– Antoine Rivarol –

***Victory belongs to the most persevering.***

– Napoleon Bonaparte –

***Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.  
Rather, in humility, value others above yourself.***

– Philippians 2:3 –



## CULTURE AND CALAMITY



According to “Peter” Xie, our local guide at Omei Mountain, there are more than 2,000 species of animals that inhabit the area, including monkeys and the rare “dead leaf” butterfly. Peter was a mild-mannered, amiable fellow, a tidy dresser, with a very cultured, professional business attitude. As a result of working a few years in the United States, Peter’s talent as a Chinese/English translator was superb.

During the two days we spent at Omei, there were opportunities to learn about Peter’s personality and motivation. He had arranged not one, but two interviews with abbots on that mountain for our visit.

Sadly, Peter’s efforts did not preclude misfortune in our crew. Anita was suffering from Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and had to be left alone at the hotel in Chengdu. She attempted to hide out in the hotel room while the crew made their assault on the mountain. Coughing, sneezing, with a stuffy nose and bronchial congestion, body aches, and

fever, Anita's suffering was repeatedly interrupted by phone calls from the front desk of the hotel. Anita tried to explain to the Mandarin voice that she did not speak Chinese. Eventually, a gentle female voice spoke over the line, in broken English, "We must clean room."

Understanding that they had hotel policy to follow, Anita vacated the room, packed up a box of tissues and a bottle of water, and wandered down to the lobby. In her weakened condition, she barely noticed the lush red carpet, finely carved statues, and ornate furniture that decorated the hallways, wide stairs, and large lounging area in front of the hotel's dining room. As it was early in the day and there were few patrons, only hotel staff bustled about with their chores.

Time passed slowly as Anita tried to sit upright on a large, ornate wooden love seat. Her mental haze was punctuated by fits of coughing. Wishing that sleep could offer some comfort, out of the corner of her eye she noticed tiny feet approaching. Looking up, she saw a young, kind face. The small, delicate hands of a concerned waitress held out a glass of hot Chinese green tea. The tea leaves swirled gently at the bottom of the clear glass. During the next hour, while the room was being cleaned, many such Chinese angels brought more tea, rehydrating Anita's body and warming her soul.

The sympathy and kindness of the hotel staff was sufficient motivation for Anita to seek fresh air, sunshine, and healing on an intentionally short journey outdoors. Beyond the hotel gate, there was a

small family-run shop where she purchased bottled water and more tissues. Farther down the road was a small, secluded city park. The tranquil atmosphere was encouraging and rejuvenating.



News of a blonde American wandering about the neighborhood traveled quickly. Several young students, who were studying English at the local college, came by to talk and practice their language skills. After a couple of hours of pleasant encounters and fascinating conversations, Anita began to lose her voice and decided to return to her room to rest. A petite college girl voluntarily escorted Anita back to the hotel, carrying the bundles of water and supplies.

The telephone was ringing in the hotel room when Anita returned. She rushed in to answer and discovered the concerned voice of a very disturbed national tour guide, Mr. Liu, who demanded, “Where have you been? I thought you were sick! You don’t sound very good! What happened to you?” He and Peter had called numerous times and been extremely worried about the missing blonde. It took some time to calm his anxiety by explaining the day’s events, with promises to behave until the film crew returned.

Meanwhile, up on Omei Mountain, the film crew

interviewed Abbot Chuan Fa at the Wannian Buddhist Temple. A lush forest surrounded that monastery, in a valley heavily populated by rhesus monkeys. That evening after supper, Dennis had a chance to speak privately with Peter about the expedition. Amiably, Peter explained his background experience, including how he had worked at the Epcot Center in Florida. His observations about our visit were fascinating.

Peter remembered that several months prior to our arrival, he was contacted by the China & Asia Travel Service agency in Chengdu. They had received our letters of introduction that we had written in both English and Chinese and mailed months in advance. Peter commented on how our requests for audiences with the temple abbots were very elegant and conveyed to him the importance of our kung fu history quest. Subsequently, Peter supervised the agency's response plan: to hand-carry those letters to each monastery and personally deliver them to the abbots.

After listening intently to Peter's story, Dennis responded with humble gratitude and explained that we were merely martial arts students and novice photographers, simply trying to preserve the remnants of kung fu history as best we could.

At the summit the next day, we interviewed Master Ben Bao at Wo Yun Buddhist Temple. That centuries-old monastery was under repair at the time. At more than 10,000 feet above sea level, Omei is frequently shrouded in clouds. We were blessed to have some favorable weather. The film crew struggled with

morning fog, trying to capture a photo of the famous “Buddha Light” – a rainbow halo around a person’s shadow cast onto a cloud deck below a brightly lit summit. Pilots frequently see this atmospheric effect, called a glory, when they see the shadow of the plane pass over a cloud.

We survived the magic and calamity of Omei Mountain with Peter’s wonderful help.



## MUSINGS

*Work as though you would live forever,  
and live as though you would die today.*

*Go another mile!*

– Og Mandino –

*The level of our success is limited only by our imagination,  
and no act of kindness, however small, is ever wasted.*

– Aesop –

*It is our choices that show what we truly are,  
far more than our abilities.*

– J. K. Rowling –

*Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear  
and the blind can see.*

– Mark Twain –

*Climb the mountains and get their good tidings.  
Nature’s peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees.  
The winds will blow their own freshness into you,  
and the storms their energy,  
while cares will drop off like autumn leaves.*

– John Muir –

*If you light a lamp for someone else  
it will also brighten your path.*

– Buddha –



## SHARING THE PARK



All too typically, gray clouds illuminated the statues of the memorial park. Getting good morning sunlight for richly saturated color photos is a rare occurrence. But the weather in China that day was good enough for diffuse lighting, and at least there was no hint of rain.

While focusing on an exquisitely detailed statue of General Kwan Kung (*Guan Yu*) on horseback with his famous cavalry battle knife, we were approached by a well-dressed, elderly gentleman. He politely waited until the photo was captured.

He smiled and said, “Pardon me. Are you the same group of American tourists that I saw here yesterday?” He stood erect and dignified, obviously not a local souvenir vendor. Rather, his attire of tan trousers, a freshly ironed shirt, leisure jacket, and stylish black shoes distinguished him as a businessman, perhaps retired, but certainly a successful man of means.

“That is correct, sir. We must compliment you on your English. How may we help you?”

“Permit me. I do not wish to intrude. It is unusual to see foreign photographers in this park for more than a few minutes. Yet, you are here for more than one day. Might I accompany you? I learned many languages while attending the university. It has been many months since I have had a chance to practice my English. I could guide you through this park and explain the monuments and practice my English, if you would allow. There is no obligation upon you. Only if you would allow a companion,” he said plainly. His sincerity seemed honest, so it was agreed that we would share the historical landscape together.

“John,” as the gentleman wished to be called, adopted his name from American movies he had enjoyed watching. John translated various Chinese inscriptions on monuments that lined the long, paved walkway. After nearly a quarter-mile along the meandering trail, John again expressed his joy of English conversation and the many topics he was able to discuss.



Our mutual fascination with photography, engineering, and science soon lead to the realization that we were nearly the same age and had had similar interests in college. Begging his indulgence, we asked what it was like growing up in China. To our amazement, John was willing to expound on the long history of struggle that his family experienced during the Cultural Revolution. We sat down on a grassy knoll and were captivated as John spoke. These are John's own words:

“When I started high school, the Chinese Cultural Revolution was just beginning. Soon, everyone was given the famous little red book by Mao Zedong and required to read it aloud in class daily. We carried it with us everywhere we went. Because of the book's anti-capitalism doctrines, many students, such as myself, were segregated because of their family-owned businesses. For generations, my family had produced goods and built a large manufacturing company that supplied many counties and employed many people. I was old enough to work in the business when I was not at school. In those days, my father worked alongside my grandfather to manage and expand the business. And so it was for our family for over a hundred years.

“When my father and grandfather realized how the Cultural Revolution was trying to change our family's business heritage, they wrote letters to county and provincial leaders. They gave speeches at community meetings. They petitioned the newspaper in an effort to plead their case for social benefit.

“Eventually, I was separated from other students and punished for having a capitalist family. I was belittled by my fellow students, called names, and pushed aside. My father and grandfather were arrested and sent to prison. After that, I never saw my grandfather again. It was many months before my father was allowed to come home. He suffered many tortures almost every day while in prison, until he renounced his business heritage and confessed to improper thoughts and behavior, complying with the edicts of the Red Guard. My father was a broken man – so different than I remembered him. All of his manufacturing business’s assets were seized and destroyed. Except for our very lives, we lost everything that our family had worked for centuries to create.



“This situation made me realize that I should adopt the school’s policies in order to survive. So I went through the motions of waving the little red book and reciting its texts, phrases, and passages. Thus, I became somewhat obscure in the student body, and people began to forget my sin of belonging to a capitalist family.

“But when I graduated from high school, my family capitalist heritage would again direct my life. I was removed from my home and sent to a re-education camp on a farm hundreds of miles away. I lived there with hundreds of other children, who were also part of the stigma that China wanted to purge from its society.

“But I am blessed to be very smart. I applied for and took the newly established college entrance examination. My score was nearly perfect. By its own rules, the government was required to send me to college. Realizing that a degree in business engineering would be my best hope for achievement, I studied hard, graduated with honors, and eventually worked for many foreign companies that do business in China. There were many opportunities for me after Deng Xiaoping became Chairman. But by that time, many of China’s cities were in decay, since there were no manufacturing companies like the one my family had once owned. It took more than 20 years for China to realize how lost industrialization was devastating the economy and society. But there was a renewed government-encouraged effort, to which I contributed my skill and energy.

“As a successful young man, I got married to start a family. When I finally had a son, I became a proud and doting father. I showered my son with much love, attention, and advantage. I provided the best education and social experiences that I could afford. I was so proud of him when he graduated from high school. It seemed that the years of suffering I had endured were finally transcended by my son’s love.



“Then one day, he went to celebrate with his friends at a nearby lake. He and his friends were so happy that day, as if they had no cares in the world at all. My heart burst with pride that his life was so much better than when I was his age.”

At this point, the sparkle of magic began to fade from John’s face. He was quiet for a moment. He turned suddenly pale, and his voice began to tremble with emotion, “My son went swimming in the lake with his friends.” There was another long pause. John sighed and looked at us, as tears welled up in his eyes. “My son drowned.”

John’s initial elegant demeanor was obviously displaced by a yoke of tragedy, which suddenly weighed heavily on his shoulders. Our condolences were graciously accepted. John sensed our sincere empathy with him. We could tell that he was struggling to show inner strength to his foreign friends. After a few minutes of silence, John regained his composure and said that he had rarely told this story to anyone, much less new acquaintances. But since we were from the States, he felt compelled, beyond reason, to tell us. Likewise, because John confided in us, we hope his heartache may somehow be diminished by spreading that anguish across many shoulders – sadness shared is half sad. As we parted ways, he expressed gratitude for our meeting and harmony in the park. But John’s parting comment was, “In China, there is no hope for the future. Nothing has really changed.” And another tear was shed.



## MUSINGS

*Study the past, if you would divine the future.*

– Confucius –

*Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow.*

*The important thing is not to stop questioning.*

– Albert Einstein –

*Everything that is done in the world is done by hope.*

– Martin Luther –

*Character, in the long run, is the decisive factor  
in the life of an individual and of nations alike.*

– Theodore Roosevelt –

*Sometimes in tragedy we find our life's purpose.*

– Robert Brault –

*Hardships often prepare ordinary people  
for an extraordinary destiny.*

– C.S. Lewis –

*Luminous beings are we, not this crude matter.*

– Yoda –

*Out of suffering have emerged the strongest souls;  
the most massive characters are seared with scars.*

– Kahlil Gibran –

*Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement.  
Nothing can be done without hope and confidence.*

– Helen Keller –

*What is life? It is the flash of a firefly in the night.  
It is the breath of a buffalo in the wintertime.  
It is the little shadow which runs across the grass  
and loses itself in the sunset.*

– Chief Crowfoot –

## SPECIAL AGENTS OF TEA AND TRAVEL



**S**tealth. The primary directives of the Qing Dynasty Emperor, for his secret journey beyond the walls of the Forbidden City, were disguise and secrecy. Discontent throughout China was rampant, occasionally turning into riots. The Emperor wanted a first-hand view of problems perceived by the common people. So he broke with tradition and the security of imperial seclusion and ordered three senior army officers to accompany him on a cross-country inspection tour. Ignoring their warnings about safety, he commanded all to be dressed inconspicuously.

The Emperor and his entourage traveled for many days, studying the attitudes and distress of the hard-working people. One evening, they visited a small café and ordered tea. The Emperor marveled at the skill and finesse of the waitress as she gracefully poured green tea into their porcelain cups without spilling a drop. The Emperor decided he would try

to do the same and rose out of his chair to refill the cups of the clandestine travelers. Everyone at the table became very nervous, anxious, and uncomfortable, as they had always served the Emperor. Never had the roles been reversed. When they started to rise, the Emperor commanded them to stay seated, lest someone notice their behavior and reveal the royal company. The officers' urge to kowtow and show honor to the Emperor was secretly shown as they gently tapped their three middle fingers on the table, three times, while the Emperor poured their tea. The general explained to the Emperor that the shape of their hands represented a kneeling person with bowed head to discreetly honor the service performed by an esteemed superior.



*Generous and Accommodating: Mr. Bing Sun*

That was the legend we learned from our special friend and travel agent, Mr. Bing Sun, of the China & Asia Travel Service, serving New York, Changsha, and other cities in China ([www.chinaasiatour.com](http://www.chinaasiatour.com)). Bing and his travel agency had made all the arrangements for past trips of our kung fu school to China. Several such tours provided cultural exchange opportunities for us and other students to interact and perform with Chinese martial artists at historic temples.

Chinese teas have been famous around the world

for centuries. Whether green, black, oolong, or white, each tea has its own essence and properties. Properly serving tea is a ceremonial process with many nuances and a very important part of Chinese business culture. The tradition of finger tapping, to kowtow to a revered person pouring tea, is practiced today as proper etiquette.

Right before our film crew expedition to China – a trip that Bing had worked hard to arrange – he flew from New York and stayed at our home in Colorado, to better understand our quest. As our guest, we were honored to receive his gift of emperor’s tea and instruction on how to properly prepare and serve it. Afterwards, we went for a hike in the forest, learning more from one another.

However, there was a temporary incongruity that challenged the congenial atmosphere – a cultural misunderstanding. We had spent several hours in our living room with Bing, drinking tea and watching numerous digital videos that we had produced. After politely watching our mini-documentaries, Bing sat back in his chair and commented, “In China, this cannot be done.”

For an instant, we mistakenly thought his statement meant that we would not be allowed to go to China and pursue our research project. Bing saw the distraught look on our faces and quickly added, “No one in China can create such passionate art as you just showed me. You must go to China and help preserve that history.”

Bing’s endorsement launched us on a journey



plagued with complexity and rewarded with unique adventure. Sharing the opportunity with other expedition members has been a privilege. The journey continues.



***While holding the tray, present the fruit.***



This is the name of a Tai Chi posture. Besides conveying the essence of body motion, it describes a graceful act of service, reminiscent of a formal tea ceremony. As Tai Chi is frequently called “Meditation in Motion,” a practitioner should contemplate servitude with this stance, like humbly holding up a tray of luscious fruit (or tea) for an honored guest’s enjoyment.

On the other side of the planet, other helping hands have assisted, encouraged, befriended, transported, and comforted us.



***Determined and Adaptable: Mr. Liu Jinyuan***

The clickity-clack of train wheels on steel rails lulled us to sleep. We enjoyed cozy sleeping compartments for the overnight journey from Wuhan to the remote Wudang Mountain area of central China. In those days, the 10-hour journey was a rare opportunity to travel and slumber at the same time. As the train rolled into Shiyan City, the station at the base of Wudang Mountain, loud knocks on the cabin

door roused us out of bed. It was Mr. Liu, a beloved friend, who worked for the China International Travel Service. We had made similar train trips with him before, but this was the first time we disembarked before dawn. He had warned us that the train would only stop for two minutes to discharge passengers from the train. Regardless of passenger needs or luggage situation, the train would roll on down the tracks exactly 120 seconds after arrival. We gathered our suitcases and backpacks and crowded into the gangway at the end of the coach. The train slowed to a crawl and then stopped.

“Go, go, go!” Mr. Liu exclaimed. We tossed bags and packs to the first members of the crew to exit, like a bucket brigade. There were no lights to illuminate the track ballast except the glow from train windows. We grabbed small flashlights out of cargo pockets as we gathered our belongings from the gravel-covered hillside. As predicted, the train started rolling away on schedule. We accounted for all our gear, wishing that dawn would soon arrive. While we struggled with heavy suitcases, backpacks, and fanny packs filled with camera gear, computers, medical supplies, tripods, and associated pieces and parts, Mr. Liu carried only one small satchel.

Alarm arose from the fringes of darkness. In the excitement to get us off the train, Mr. Liu had forgotten his own suitcase. Despair was quickly shared by all of us as the train’s taillight disappeared around a curve and into the dark.

With some quick cell phone calls, the situation

was rectified, and Mr. Liu made arrangements for his suitcase to be sent back to Shiyan City on a return train. Experience and resourcefulness were Mr. Liu's most valuable assets. We have learned much from him. Even with his support, some trails were not smooth and easy, however.

Spring monsoon rains created treacherous travel conditions on another trip. Due to washed-out roads, the only way to reach many historical sites was to traverse muddy mountain paths on foot. Some areas of Wudang Mountain were even blocked by armed guards because trails were destroyed by large mudslides. To make matters worse, before our arrival, the assigned local Wudang guide had fallen ill, and the only available replacement was an individual who spoke no English. As frustrating as it was to deal with the Hubei dialect, Mr. Liu rose to the challenge and interpreted many important and historic dialogues. Again, resourcefulness and dedication proved virtuous.



*Gentle and Congenial: Mr. Peng Huashan*

Caring for foreign martial arts students in China does not bear any resemblance to coddling. Sweating together in an American gymnasium while learning tiger-style or other kung fu forms is not much different from sweating profusely in the humid heat of a summer in China. Mr. Peng, senior official with

the China International Travel Service agency, had learned that creature comforts were not high on the priority list for Shaolin students visiting from the United States. The adventure of a rare journey was the highest priority. So no sympathy was given during summer tours of remote mountain sites.

Stifling. There was no other way to describe the weather. China in July is oppressive for westerners from high, cool, dry climates. Dank smells assault the nose. High heat and humid air attack the skin. Dehydration is an hourly threat.

Our tour bus swerved through a traffic gauntlet – ox carts, bicycles, delivery trucks, cars, and pedestrians – all trying to simultaneously occupy the same space on the road. In the front seat of the bus, by the driver, rode our unassuming and humble friend, Mr. Peng. He wore a distinctive yellow baseball cap that made him easy to find in a crowd. About 5 feet 5 inches tall, his kind, round face and sparkling eyes lent an air of hospitality to our trips. While visiting different geographical locations, a local, English-speaking tour guide was assigned to highlight special tourist attractions. Generally, however, the local guides had little experience with energetic groups like ours. Tourist groups typically behave according to their cultural background. Some only take pictures through bus windows, unwilling to separate themselves from a novel brought along for entertainment or the cool bus air conditioning. Others may wander a little ways off, then return, ready for another bus ride to the next attraction. Kung fu tourists, however, scattered

to the wind when the tour bus doors were opened – uncontrollable free spirits. This amused Mr. Peng. He always enjoyed watching new tour guides trying to deal with our group.

“Shaolin, Shaolin!” they’d yell through their megaphones, while waving their little, colored tour flags. This generated no response from the martial artists, and Mr. Peng would smile quietly to himself.

“They’re not coming!” the local guide would exclaim.

With a grin, he’d reply, “Of course not, they’re Shaolin!”

His understanding and congeniality has genuinely endeared him to us. We once shared this deep friendship through a glass window. After traveling over 24 hours from the States, we arrived in Shanghai. Wearily, we disembarked the plane and wandered through a long maze of airport corridors. After clearing customs, we trudged along single-file, trailing our wheeled suitcases toward the main concourse. The line of passengers suddenly stopped, clogged by a singular exit doorway. Beyond the din of noise from loud speakers and grumbling tourists, our eyes caught a glimpse of movement – someone waving on the other side of a huge glass-paneled wall. It was Mr. Peng! Unable to converse through the glass, we pressed our hands against his through the pane. We shared a moment of unspoken friendship and care, with eyes that spoke words that no tongue could verbalize. We shared kindred spirits forged under the duress and excitement of foreign travel.





### *Youthful and Educated: Miss Eko Liying*

National Teacher's Day is an annual holiday celebrated throughout China every September. Education is a cherished treasure in China, the value of which is demonstrated by students who honor their favorite teachers with banquets, gifts, and parties.

After spending a day touring the Forbidden City, Temple of Heaven, and the Summer Palace in Beijing, our local tour guide, Eko Liying, explained the efforts and sacrifices that her parents had made for her education. Students in China who fail to pass achievement tests in 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, or 12<sup>th</sup> grade are dismissed from school – permanently. Family funds and resources were spent to buy tutors for Eko. Every possible asset was committed to her pursuit and completion of a college degree. Assisting her in that effort was her high school language-arts teacher. He was revered by Eko and her classmates as their favorite teacher. Consequently, his students invited him to a banquet to celebrate National Teacher's Day. Eko drove us to the school where he still taught and introduced us to him, inside his classroom.

We were subsequently invited to join the party in a private dining room at a large Beijing restaurant. The room was crowded and dimly lit. Humidity and cigarette smoke filled the air. Several tables were loaded with large bowls of noodle soup, boiled cabbage, rice, steamed vegetables, chicken, duck,

tofu, and a variety of sauces. The students applauded when their former teacher entered the room. We were introduced as honored guests. The reunion of lifelong friends – the gathering of young adults surrounding their esteemed teacher with gifts and toasts and enthusiasm – was impressive.

Eko was the only person we knew and the only one in the room who spoke English. As the evening wore on, it was clear that the teacher and his former students treasured education and friendship far more than any possessions they might have. Eko confessed her most desired dream would be to be an English-speaking guide in America and “live in paradise.”

They were still partying when we left and returned to our hotel in a taxi. We prepared camera gear for our trip to The Great Wall of China, scheduled for early morning. The next day, Eko arrived late at our hotel and was too tired to hike with us to the ruins of The Great Wall. But we understood her situation and commended her respect for her teacher.

Even Confucius is still honored on National Teacher Day.



*With love, one has the power to be brave.  
With simplicity, one can afford to be generous.  
With humility, one can let others be first.*

– Lao Tzu –

*What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters  
compared to what lies within us.*

– Ralph Waldo Emerson –

## 118-YEAR-OLD NUN



**L**i Chengyu was born in Hubei Province in 1885. She was 118 years old when a few of our film crew members met her living in the ruins of the Yuxu Palace, an historic Taoist sanctuary at the base of Wudang Mountain. Despite her age, she taught Tai Chi and Taoist philosophy to a select group of students every day.

The 250-acre Yuxu complex, first constructed in 1413 A.D., had multiple structures and was surrounded by a brick wall almost 20 feet tall. The level estate grounds were covered with wild, unkempt grass. Huge cube-shaped shrines were geometrically arranged on the premises. Most had crumbling steps and ceilings. Brambles and vines grew out of cracks in the mortar and on the roofs. There was a brick-lined canal cut diagonally across the property to control flooding during the rainy season. Several arched bridges provided access to the rear of the property across that waterway.

Beyond the bridges was a long, dilapidated building: the Parental Hall was the only habitable structure and extant worship temple at Yuxu. A small room adjacent to the altar of worship was Master Li's living quarters, in which there were many embroidered pillows for seating guests and several large, faded, hand-woven wool rugs. On one wall was an old black-and-white photo. It was a picture of her in her youth with Abbot Xu Benshan, whom she admired more than anyone else at Wudang. From him, she learned spiritual discipline, through which she became deeply devoted to prayer for healing herself and others. On the other side of the room was a small bronze statue of Lao Tzu, patriarch of Taoism.

Master Li greeted visitors in her chambers while seated in a perfect lotus posture on one of her large, plush pillows. An audience with the venerable nun was usually very brief but sufficient to share a bit of serenity from her humble nature. We have learned that her life was filled with many trials and hardships, especially during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. From a poverty-stricken, sickly childhood, she transitioned to Wudang monastic life and suffered periods of floods, drought, famine, and war. But her tenacity, developed through decades of personal struggle and devout piety, was more than survival instinct – it was spirit-driven.

Perplexed by the complexity of Wudang history, we returned on another fact-finding mission just 10 months later. As before, we were the only visitors present inside the vast palace walls. The bricks

and mortar of the old drum and bell towers that had suffered the elements for more than 500 years, looked more distressed than before. The bases of other archways were sadly littered with large chunks of molding and pieces of the huge turtle statues that supported tablets dedicated to Chinese emperors. Along the creek, which flows through Yuxu, gorgeous fall flower blossoms were the most visibly distinct changes to the ruins and the only sign of improvement or beauty.



Master Li Chengyu, Wudangshan nun

*Photo courtesy of Wudang Taoist Assn.*



After a casual stroll through the grounds seeking new photographic opportunities, we returned again to the Parental Hall temple at the far end of the complex. This time, we took note of the calligraphy on the doorframe as we entered the temple. The inscription was a poem, a Chinese couplet or *duilian* composed by an ancient artisan to express complementary opposites, with profound yin/yang meaning and written in a tonal rhyme in Mandarin:

*Long live the spirit of Taoism.*

*The heart of the believer is not far from the top of the peak.*

*You are close to the faith.*

*True believer will go to the top of the mountain.*

When we entered the small, dimly lit temple, there was a young monk seated behind a rickety wooden reception desk, decorated with yellow cloth. In front of the altar, three kneeling pillows were evenly spaced on the bare concrete floor. The monk was studying religious manuscripts. We had anxiously prepared Mr. Liu, our national guide, to discreetly announce us and request an impromptu audience with the nun, Master Li. We had brought a picture of her with us and showed it to the monk while Mr. Liu introduced us. With great anticipation, we smiled and quietly watched the monk slowly rise from his chair and take the photo in his hands.

The young monk lowered his eyes briefly, in response to Mr. Liu's entreaty. Softly the monk said, "She is not here."

So we asked Mr. Liu to inquire when she might return – today or even tomorrow?

The monk's reply was simple: "She has become immortal."

We responded to Mr. Liu's translation with a look of bewilderment and confusion. Then Mr. Liu explained that Master Li had passed away.

Our hearts sank, and we suddenly felt like intruders into the monk's memories of his master. Her piece of Wudang Mountain history was now lost to us. Master Li Chengyu had died in February 2003. We bowed to the monk and said, "We are sorry for your loss." The monk bowed in return after hearing Mr. Liu's translation. As we left the room, Mr. Liu commented about how gracious our comment was to the monk. We told him it is our customary way to empathize with people whose friends have died. Mr. Liu said our words were greatly appreciated by the monk.

In retrospect, Master Li was an exemplary embodiment of longevity. Empathizing with her disciples seemed to create yet another bond between us and the monasteries in China. But we have discovered that martial arts provides many examples of fortitude, health, and well-being. Master Li's home was Wudang Mountain, most famous for Tai Chi martial arts that was developed by Zhang Sanfeng more than 700 years ago. Her daily exercise with focused, slow movements of Tai Chi provided major health benefits and prolonged her life. It kept her moving. Her meditative studies and social contributions to other monks and nuns at the temples

kept her mind sharp. Every morning in parks of towns and major cities across China, people practice Tai Chi and chi kung (*Qigong*) – body energy postures – to help revitalize their lives.

While Wudang Taoists rely on Tai Chi, Buddhist monasteries at the Shaolin Temples also have a history of meditative postures. Damo was the Buddhist monk from India who began teaching martial arts at the Henan Province Shaolin Temple in the sixth century A.D. Damo taught Shaolin monks 49 postures to keep them awake during meditation rituals. These I Chin Ching (*Yijinjing*) postures are similar to the asanas of Yoga but are designed to invigorate the natural energy of the body (*chi*) through isometric tension. This helped the Shaolin monks to meditate better, become stronger and more flexible, and defend their temple.

Tai Chi is called “meditation in motion” because of its slow, precise movements. Wudang-style and other advanced forms of Tai Chi help the practitioner develop a great sense of awareness. Heightened awareness allows the practitioner to actually sense the motion of air across the body, even during slow maneuvers. Some call this “swimming in air.” This sensitivity translates into martial arts as an awareness of the surrounding environment, assisting in self-defense, much like a deer on alert in the forest.

So keen and refined are the senses of legendary kung fu masters that they were able to sense trouble around them before an attack. Such was the story of Su Kong Tai Djin. In that legend, Grandmaster Su sent out invitations to Shaolin monasteries across China

for kung fu masters to meet in the Abbot's Hall at the Fujian Province Shaolin Temple. They were secretly gathering to discuss strategy during a time of war. The meeting room walls were made of hand-hewn granite blocks. There were no windows. When the massive wooden doors were locked, the only light in the room came from the altar where a statue of Buddha was illuminated by several hundred candles. As the 11 attending masters bowed to Grandmaster Su, instead of returning the bow, Su drew a knife from his robe and threw it into the rafters. The colleagues were stunned when the body of an assassin fell from the ceiling, his heart pierced by Su's knife. Grandmaster Su explained that he had heard 13 beating hearts in the room, not just those of the 12 Shaolin masters.



## MUSINGS

*The key to immortality is first  
living a life worth remembering.*

– Bruce Lee –

*Live long and prosper.*

– Mr. Spock –

*In the way of righteousness there is life;  
along that path is immortality.*

– Proverbs 12:28 –

*Even death is not to be feared by one who has lived wisely.*

– Buddha –

*There is no death. Only a change of worlds.*

– Chief Seattle –

## HIGH VOLTAGE



A friend once said, “When you let the smoke out of a circuit board, it does not work any more.” He comically inferred that there is some magic smoke that makes all our electrical gadgets function, behave, or operate as we command them. If so, then there must also be magic smoke stored inside of batteries, from which they somehow transfer magical power to those gadgets. Thus, when a battery runs out of smoke, it no longer functions properly and must be replaced by another smoke storage unit. Consequently, there are magical black boxes that transfer some vaporous potion, so that depleted batteries can be replenished with new smoke. This incantation process is commonly called “recharging.” Whether this is magic, myth, hoax, or Ohm’s Law, anyone who has witnessed an electrical device, circuit, plug, or connector emit smoke – or worst-case, be engulfed in flame – knows that the object is “toast,” burned out. Said device must be replaced. Otherwise, our gadget-command license expires.

Electricity is supposed to be a utilitarian amenity – a convenience. Yet disconnection, interruption, or outage suddenly makes life very inconvenient, if not utterly complicated. Unwritten “Laws of Convenient Appliances” suggest modern dependence on electrical



apparatus – lights, cameras, phones, music, video, and other entertainment widgets – eventually becomes necessity.

When one leaves the good ole USA, our domestic form of electric energy – 120 volt, 60 Hertz (cycles per second), Alternating Current (AC) – is NOT the standard everywhere else on the planet. In China, 220 volt, 50 Hertz is the standard. And it is quite common to have rolling “brown outs,” where cities have commercial electric power turned off intentionally, in rotating sectors, for conservation. Indeed, there are areas where electric power is not available at all, like the tops of mountains. As with any wilderness situation, one must bring essential supplies for backcountry operations. Having electric power 24 hours a day from a wall socket is a luxury, not the norm.

Since photography has transcended the old film era and evolved into the digital-photo age, electric power has become a daily necessity. Direct Current (DC) batteries can conveniently supply crucial energy. Besides cameras, there are computers, microphones, and video and audio recorders that require batteries. Unfortunately, unlike AC shore power, which is homogeneously delivered to homes and offices, these portable field devices have specialized DC battery dimensions, voltage, and amp-hour energy criteria. Thus, we need a variety of batteries that have unique designs: 1.5 volt AA, 1.2v AAA, 3.5v E-106, 9v, *ad nauseam*.

Different power requirements for all of the

equipment makes trekking around sacred mountains quite challenging. Living for days or weeks where obtaining food and fresh water is problematic, it is even more difficult to find places to buy new batteries (those luxury commodities necessary to replace those from which all the smoke has escaped). Resupply must come from our backpacks, or else some recording operations cease. In the current era of improved rechargeable batteries, all we need is a way to charge up the exhausted cells, thus magically returning life to our devices. Why not just carry battery chargers on the expedition? Good idea.

However, this adds more complexity to traveling: Our battery chargers have voltage transformers designed for U.S. wall sockets (120v-AC). Why do DC batteries care what comes out of a wall socket? Whether energy magic is 60-Hertz smoke or 50-Hertz smoke, what difference does it make? Possible solution: just bring a power converter that properly transforms electric power. OK. Done. And since there are many batteries and devices that need to be recharged, also bring a power distribution strip so all of them can be recharged simultaneously. Done. So how much “portable” equipment do we need? The itemized logistics list of gear for our first photo expedition netted 782 pieces of field equipment, all inventoried and equally distributed among the film crew by weight. Each of the 10 black belts on that mission, which researched the history of four sacred martial arts mountains in China, carried sufficient equipment to cover expected needs, plus

a contingency of spare parts and adapters. That equipment list did not include personal items such as clothing and toiletries. Such an operation would be very difficult today with current luggage weight regulations. But most of that gear was carried into the field with backpacks.

What if something goes wrong? Well, hiking for hours each day across strange landscape, and perhaps climbing ten thousand steps in a day, would frequently find us exhausted come sundown. Working to capture photos and videos of landscapes, temples, monks, and ceremonies was exhilarating, but fatigue sometimes affected our decision-making paradigms. Occasionally, the shorts in our cerebral cortex neural network carried over to shorts in our electrical gear.



While remembering the theory of escaping smoke, remember also that photographers used to operate in darkrooms where film was developed and prints were processed

with chemical baths. When a U.S. power strip/surge suppressor is plugged into a Chinese wall socket without proper channeling through the correct series of transformers, it is possible to turn an entire floor of a hotel into a darkroom. “De-lighted” does not properly describe the hotel staff when that happened. They were understandably alarmed and frustrated, and we were embarrassed and crippled. Not only did

the circuit breaker switches turn off, but our surge suppressor strip also burned up, emitting lots of smoke. Fortunately, we all worked together to restore power in the hotel and quickly remedied the situation (less one power strip). Smiles and bowing concluded the joint repair mission.

Thenceforth, a networking standard has been carried on subsequent pilgrimages. We bring a photo schematic as reassurance of proper electrical connectivity. It shows the correct sequence of transformers, power strips, converters, adapters, and chargers, so no smoke is let out of any components or building circuits of other hotels in the future. It may not be perfect or beautiful, but it helps the magic work – at least for us. Compare our old wiring diagram to recent photos of “applied” electrical codes in urban and rural China.



From electrical short circuits comes enlightenment. It is best to replace tangles with symmetry. Lucid thought is difficult when exhausted. Rest and rejuvenation after hard labor enables discharged life energy to be recharged. Even with best intentions, trial and error may be the only method available to solve

a new problem. If something breaks, repair it. A sage becomes wise by learning from mistakes. Another sage cultivates a sense of humor, so he can laugh when things go wrong.



## MUSINGS

*There are three kinds of men.  
The one that learns by reading.  
The few who learn by observation.  
The rest of them have to touch  
the electric fence for themselves.*

– Will Rogers –

*Electricity is really just organized lightning.*

– George Carlin –

*Do not go where the path may lead,  
go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.*

– Ralph Waldo Emerson –

*What is soul? It's like electricity –  
we don't really know what it is,  
but it's a force that can light a room.*

– Ray Charles –

*Out of clutter, find Simplicity.  
From discord, find Harmony.  
In the middle of difficulty lies Opportunity.*

– Albert Einstein –

*Always do right. This will gratify some people  
and astonish the rest.*

– Mark Twain –

*You're only given a little spark of madness,  
and if you lose that, you're nothing.*

– Robin Williams –



## THE TALE OF JOY



Shanghai is one of the largest, most traffic-congested cities in the world. Anyone who can ride a bicycle across Shanghai all the way to Suzhou is a tenacious soul. Such accomplishment and determination lives in the spirit of Jiang “Joy” Wu, a staff member at the University of Colorado. Joy was raised and educated in China, before marrying her husband, Marty, and moving to the States.

Joy’s tenacity was not a gift of birth nor divine providence. All skill sets must start somewhere, and the Olympic-size swimming pool at the American University Recreation Center was an incubation chamber for both Joy and Anita, neither of whom were competent swimmers. Both had goals to vacation with their husbands in the tropical splendor of the British Virgin Islands surrounded by surf and sea. So that is how the friendship began, in Swimming 101 class.

High humidity and the smell of chlorine did little to mask their apprehension and timid reluctance. While

the young male instructor was totally optimistic that all the adult students would be sufficiently able to swim laps in the pool by the end of the course, it was a daunting challenge to Anita and Joy.

Over the next several weeks, they shared fears, hopes, and dreams with a number of the other swimmers, discovering that adults learn to swim for a variety of reasons – not the least of which perhaps is just childhood play, delayed. Amidst the splashing, trying, failing, sinking, and flailing, they eventually found their “gills” and “fins,” fulfilling the predictions of the swimming instructor and mastering their fear of water.

Our friendship with Joy and Marty went well beyond the depths of the pool. Over time, dinners, and other celebrations, our connection has become a resource for learning. In exchange for the encouragement we gave her during swim class, Joy has reciprocated with help reading and translating Chinese history books we have collected on our expeditions. As we shared our passion for the Chinese martial arts and its history, Joy became enthralled and offered to help. Her efforts were time-consuming and tedious, but she helped our knowledge grow and encouraged us to learn more. Thus, we all have survived being in the deep end of the pool, physically and metaphorically.

Sometimes you find tremendous gifts in the most unexpected places.



## MUSINGS

*Opportunity is missed by most people  
because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work.*

– Thomas A. Edison –

*God can cause opportunity to find you.  
He has unexpected blessings where you  
suddenly meet the right person,  
or suddenly your health improves,  
or suddenly you're able to pay off your house.  
That's God shifting things in your favor.*

– Joel Osteen –

*The sage encourages people to live simply  
without desire and to support each other.*

– Lao Tzu –

*A man only learns in two ways, one by reading,  
and the other by association with smarter people.*

– Will Rogers –

*Your time is limited, don't waste it living someone else's life.  
Don't be trapped by dogma,  
which is living the result of other people's thinking.  
Don't let the noise of other opinions  
drown your own inner voice.  
And most important, have the courage  
to follow your heart and intuition –  
they somehow already know what you truly want to become.  
Everything else is secondary.*

– Steve Jobs –

*Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can.  
Absorb what is useful. Discard what is not.  
Add what is uniquely your own.*

– Bruce Lee –

## TALE OF TWO COMPOSERS



Having created several personal digital videos using canned tunes for soundtrack music, we discovered that original compositions would be required for public performances of documentaries at film festivals. The realm of digital music was not totally foreign territory, since we had dabbled with Musical Instrument Digital Interface (MIDI) technology and computer-generated scores in years past. But eventually, the concept of having someone write custom orchestrations evolved from a whimsical extravagance to a virtual necessity. Fortunately, the credentials of a fellow kung fu student, Maestro Gregory Walker, professor of music at the University of Colorado, provided a solution.

One day in black-belt class, we broached the topic

of music composition with Maestro Greg. He was very keen to discuss the matter. The conversation expanded to favorite famous composers but was interrupted when Master Sharon instructed the class, “Get your sparring gear on.”

A sea of kung fu uniforms churned near the storage room, as people gathered mouthpieces, elbow pads, and shin guards. Students were sweaty from warm-up exercises and kung fu lessons, giving the room an aroma comically called “Shaolin Dew.” Partners were chosen, and the first sparring match began. The room was charged with energy. The composer discussion continued during the match and moved beyond Beethoven and The Beatles to authors of motion picture soundtrack scores.

Watching Dennis spar with Greg looked less like Bruce Lee vs. Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and more like a match between Buster Keaton and the Keystone Cops. Greg was tall, thin, and limber, like Kareem, and nearly as tall when leaping into the air. Dennis was clearly distracted. Greg slyly took advantage of the music conversation. The battle was decisively won when Greg jumped up, twirled around, and planted a spinning outside smash with his left foot into Dennis’s left jaw. It was not a deliberate blow to the head. It was more like Dennis unwittingly leaned into it.

During sparring practice in our kung fu school, only light force is allowed when striking an opponent in the head, unless protective headgear is worn. As this was not the case, there was a brief pause in the sparring dance, while Greg apologized to Dennis, who

graciously accepted, and then punches and kicks again began to fly.

After the match, more details were exchanged about a need for someone to create video documentary music. Professor Walker did not hesitate to recommend one of his favorite students from the university music composition degree program, Matthew Craggs.

Our first meeting with Matt was arranged at a local restaurant. The scrumptious meal was only a brief interlude in the splendid two-hour exchange about renowned movie artists. How pleasant and inspiring it was to discover that despite our age differences, we shared a mutual admiration for composers like Jerry Goldsmith, John Barry, James Horner, and others. Listening to Matt's original compositions was even more delightful.

Editing video productions changed dramatically after Matt joined our team. Always before, a soundtrack was edited first, and the visual scenes were then synchronized to the beat and mood of the music. Matt's talent required quite the opposite. The new creative environment started with digital video and computer graphics, then Matt designed music to enhance that visual experience. Acclimation to this inverted editing paradigm seemed difficult for a while, but the end result was extraordinarily rewarding.

For more than 15 years, we have admired the many individual accomplishments of Matt and Greg and always enjoy being entertained by their creative musical talents.





## MUSINGS

*Creativity is intelligence having fun.*

– Albert Einstein –

*Music produces a kind of pleasure  
which human nature cannot do without.*

– Confucius –

*From palaces adorned with ivory  
the music of the strings makes you glad.*

– Psalms 45:8 –

*It is by the Odes that the mind is aroused.*

*It is by the Rules of Propriety  
that the character is established.*

*It is from Music that the finish is received.*

– Confucius –

*Musical training is  
a more potent instrument than any other,  
because rhythm and harmony  
find their way into the inward places of the soul;  
on which they mightily fasten, imparting grace,  
and making the soul of him who is rightly educated graceful,  
or of him who is ill-educated ungraceful.*

– Plato –

*Whatever the mind can conceive and believe,  
the mind can achieve.*

– Napoleon Hill –

**ENTHUSIASM:** *Greek: en + theos = in + god;  
inspired by a god;  
an intense emotion that creates burning desire.*

## SUITCASE ASSAULT OF GRANITE PEAKS



The term *Huashan* translates as “flower mountain,” so named for its five petalled peaks arranged like a blossom. It has been a sanctuary for reclusive Taoist monks. Hua Mountain is a dangerous place. Every year, many climbers fall to their deaths from the precipitous white granite cliffs. No pitons or ropes, nor any technical climbing skills are required for tourists to ascend the sacred peaks. Rather, tens of thousands of hand-hewn steps provide access along perilous trails. It is more than 20 miles from the village to North Peak, and many more miles to reach West, South, East, and Central Peak monasteries, each with its own magnificent vistas. But the irregular, steep granite steps often rise at 60-degree angles. In places, big steel chains, anchored into the cliffs, are rigged for near-vertical sections exceeding 80 degrees. Small plateaus and

tiny crevasses provide the only places for climbers to rest and safely photograph the awesome landscape. There are some areas, such as the Plank Walk, where voids below cliffs exceed one mile down to the next rock ledge.

Mr. Lu, a gentle soul, quite skilled in English and local history, had chosen “Sonny” as his English name and was our local guide for the November assault of Hua Mountain. He described the Chin Mountain Range lying near the Yellow River as having the shape of a dragon, with Hua Mountain being the head. We had prepared and trained for this portion of our photographic expedition, carrying our gear in sturdy, red Lowe Alpine® backpacks. If we had only realized what Sonny had planned to use for his extra clothing and supplies for the overnight stay on top of Hua, we could have provided a spare backpack for him also. But it was too late when we reached the first, long set of stairs and saw him pulling a small, wheeled travel suitcase behind him. It was often hard to watch him wrestle with the grips and handles or balance the wheeled base on the rocks. But Sonny’s tranquil temperament was fortified by inscrutable tenacity. When Sonny summited the daunting cliffs of West Peak, we hoisted his suitcase up the last ladder carved into the vertical rock wall and applauded his arrival.

By then, there was barely sufficient time to photograph the colors of sunset, and it was too dangerous to safely descend the mountain. So Sonny arranged impromptu lodging with the temple monks at the monastery built into the granite slope just below

West Peak. The monks served green tea, hot boiled cabbage, steamed bok choy, rice, and freshly baked buns to their unexpected guests. After our long day of hiking, it was a glorious feast.

Sleeping accommodations for Sonny and the four crew members spending the night on Hua were very meager. There were small dorm rooms with whitewashed walls, a couple of chairs, a very small wooden table, a gaudy red velvet curtain covering a single-pane window, and two small beds adorned with a small, old pillow, one sheet, and one thin blanket. Fortunately, there was one electric lamp by the beds. Unfortunately, the rooms were unheated. As the temperature dropped to 35° Fahrenheit during the night, the concrete block walls mounted on raw granite provided no insulation. We wore every article of clothing we had packed up the mountain. But jackets, pants, gloves, and sweatsuits were not sufficient to keep us from shivering under our single blanket cover. The only bathroom facility – a necessary convenience – was outdoors. A singular block wall defined its open-air stall with a small, slanted tin roof and two slits in the concrete floor for the latrine.

At 4 a.m. we gave up trying to sleep any longer and prepared to climb up West Peak again for dawn photos. We discovered that it was warmer outside, by a few degrees, than it had been in the room. After a granola bar for breakfast and warming camera batteries in our pants pockets so they would function, we captured Hua sunrise images and headed off to



the other main peaks, spending another full day exploring the other petals of the “flower mountain.”

Sonny Lu seemed adequately content during the ordeal. He must have anticipated the overnight situation, because when we saw him in the morning, he was wearing a white down-filled parka.

Sonny always had a congenial smile on his face. He never complained but was always willing to assist. And amazingly, both wheels of his suitcase were still attached when we reached town.

## MUSINGS

*Step with care and great tact,  
and remember that life is a great balancing act.*

– Dr. Seuss –

*Life is a lot like jazz. It's best when you improvise.*

– George Gershwin –

*This is a brief life, but in its brevity it offers us some  
splendid moments, some meaningful adventures.*

– Rudyard Kipling –

*To climb steep hills requires slow pace at first.*

– William Shakespeare –

*Wherever you go, go with all your heart.*

– Confucius –



## HEALTH, WELLNESS, AND LONGEVITY



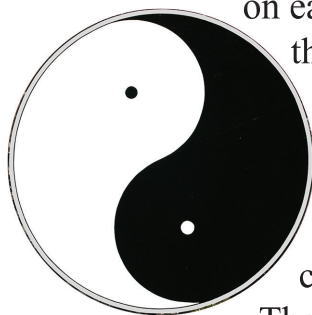
Our three-week expedition at Wudang Mountain was about to end. The more time we spent with our Taoist monk friend, Victor (Gu Shi Yi), the more we learned about that mountain's treasures. The Wudang Boxing style of martial arts, practiced by most Taoist monks, includes training in herbal and holistic medicine. Victor introduced us to his colleague, Dr. Zhou Yin, a licensed Chinese physician and trained herbal specialist. Hundreds of healing herbs and plants grow in the forests of Wudang, where Dr. Zhou has devoted many years cultivating his expert knowledge.

We spent several hours with Victor and Dr. Zhou, wandering through the lush spring foliage along trails that meander below the famous Hanging Cliff Temple of the South Crag Palace. So abundant were the local herbs that Dr. Zhou would scarcely walk a few yards



before showing us a new specimen.

The black-and-white Taoist Yin/Yang symbol is a circular graphic depicting an entwined cycle of opposites, infinitely chasing each other. It represents counterbalance principles: front/back, top/bottom, female/male, high/low, in/out, etc. Neither section is totally whole or empty, as represented by the “eye”



on each side, colored or tainted like the opposite portion. Tai Chi Chuan that originated at Wudang Mountain as a martial art style, is sometimes called “Meditation in Motion” due to its slow, contemplative movements.

The primary goal of a Tai Chi practitioner is balance, and every step emulates Yin/Yang principles.

During our interview of Dr. Zhou, he explained how Chinese medicine is structured like their philosophical concept of Yin and Yang. Yin-healing is long-term nutritional repair, deep within the body. Herbal enrichment encourages the body to repair itself by purging toxins and making energy flow properly through body meridians. Yang-healing is more like treating a symptom, such as quick pain relief. Yin works in a bottom-up fashion, while Yang works in a top-down manner. Dr. Zhou said that while patients benefit from both, long-term healing and improvement is best obtained from Yin nutrition. But it might take many months of treatment to achieve significant results because there are many impurity layers to

purge and heal. With the help of Victor's excellent translation skills, we acknowledged Dr. Zhou's theories by sharing our own personal success with immune system-building herbal supplements such as neem, astragalus, olive leaf, and nettle. Additionally, we've used topical ointments or liniments such as *dit da jow* or *zheng gu shui*, obtained from local Asian markets, for sore muscles. We've discovered *loquat* extract and aloe vera (which requires a prescription in China) for minor pain relief.



Dr. Zhou recounted the heritage of his medical studies. He described significant contributions to herbal medicine and pharmacology by a famous Chinese doctor, Li Shizhen. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D., Dr. Li recorded his botanical, zoological, and mineralogical medical achievements in a scientific collection called the *Compendium of Materia Medica*

(*Bencao Gaungmu*). That medical text can be found in most large Chinese bookstores today and has been translated into English and other languages. The book has sketches and drawings of plants, animals, and insects and their specific healing attributes, all cataloged according to disease, malady, or symptom. Dr. Zhou emphasized that more than 400 of those healing agents grow naturally on Wudang Mountain.

Just as Hippocrates was a renowned Greek physician in western civilization, China's most esteemed physician was Dr. Hua Tuo. Late in the second century A.D., he developed acupuncture and herbal medicine for healing and anesthesia for surgery. Sadly, unlike Dr. Shizhen's *Materia Medica*, the voluminous medical records of Dr. Hua Tuo were not preserved for posterity.

The infamous demise of the talented doctor was due to tragic distrust by his patient, Emperor Cao Cao, who suffered from severe headaches. Dr. Hua frequently treated the emperor's symptoms successfully. But eventually, Dr. Hua Tuo diagnosed the real problem as a brain tumor and recommended surgery to eliminate the headaches. The emperor was suspicious, however, and believing assassination was the doctor's ulterior motive, Dr. Hua Tuo was executed. Subsequently, the legend concedes his medical record scrolls were entrusted to a compassionate prison guard. But fearing that the wrath of the emperor would extend to any friend or acquaintance of the doctor, the wife of the prison guard burned the entire library and it was lost forever.

Dr. Hua Tuo's tomb is at the base of Hua Mountain.

Part of his auspicious legacy, handed down by his disciples, is a healthful exercise called "Hua Tuo's Five Animal Play." Based on the observed behaviors of bears, deer, tigers, monkeys, and cranes, as they frolicked and cared for themselves, Dr. Hua Tuo developed postures, stretching, and acupuncture stimulants that mimicked those creature's habits. Martial artists still practice those techniques to stimulate energy flow in the body – *chi*. Thanks to the efforts of physicians like Dr. Hua Tuo and Dr. Li Shizhen, such biological energy channels were mapped in the body as meridians that connect major organs to the extremities, crossing through junctions on the skin commonly called acupuncture points.

Dr. Zhou Yin serves patients all around Wudang Mountain, encouraging them to do Tai Chi exercise and preserve their health with nutritional herbs that are frequently found growing in the wild.



*New beginnings are often disguised as painful endings.*

– Lao Tzu –

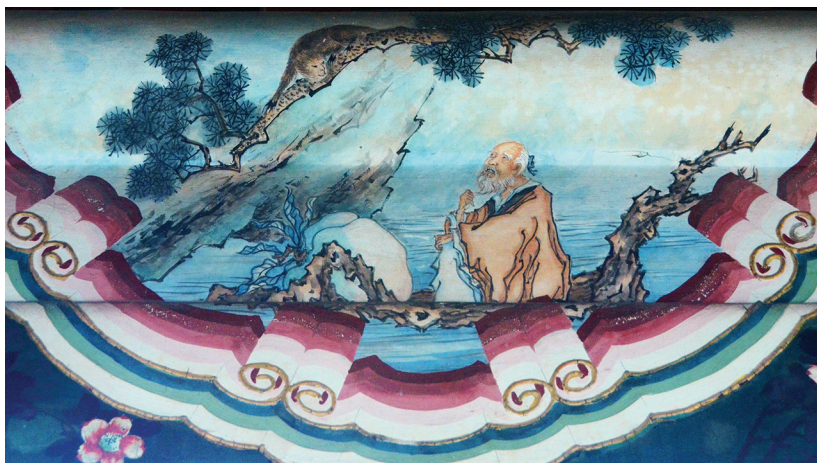
*To keep the body in good health is a duty;  
otherwise we shall not be able  
to keep our minds strong and clear.*

– Buddha –

*Whatever the present moment contains,  
accept it as if you had chosen it.  
Always work with it, not against it.*

– Eckhart Tolle –

## MONKEY VALLEY



Bright dawn light heightened our anticipation for the day. We were en route to accomplish two missions on one hiking trail. The van slowed down for the last curve approaching Sword River. On the right, we passed the old Tianjin Bridge, built in 1413 A.D. by the third Ming Dynasty Emperor, Yongle. We stopped in the shade of a large willow tree and stepped out onto damp dirt, which at the time was the only parking spot at the entrance of Monkey Valley. The canyon formed by the Sword River was not only home for macaque monkeys but also for the reclusive site of a sacred meditation cliff used by Zhang Sanfeng, the creator of Wudang Mountain's famous martial arts style, Tai Chi Chuan.

A remnant of springtime flooding in central China, high humidity would make hiking up the canyon a struggle for us. Leaving some equipment in the car, we walked toward the riverbank, slipping down the muddy path and pushing through high bushes. Once



we reached the valley floor, the path widened to meet the edge of a dam, of sorts. The concrete and stone causeway made a lovely array of waterfalls across the entire width of the river. The top of the dam was segmented with stone blocks, about three feet apart, by which one could step across the small waterfalls and reach the other bank. It was frightfully exhilarating to jump across the multiple rushing torrents. Don't think about tripping.

Once on the other side, we followed yet another muddy path upstream. Additional river crossings were necessary farther up the valley. Many places had less modern methods of traversal, like logs and boulders. Across one gorge there was a nice rope-and-plank hanging bridge that swung lazily beneath our feet. By then, the climate within the deep canyon walls was hot and humid. We marveled at Mr. Liu, our travel guide, who deftly maneuvered through the valley wearing low-cut loafers. He rolled up his pant legs in an attempt to stay cool.





As we made our way upstream, we saw from a distance a family of monkeys playing on a cliff across the water, about 100 yards away. We were the only tourists in the vicinity, so we were largely ignored. After being briefly entertained by their antics, we pressed on to locate the meditation cliff.

Our scenic hike along the river was interrupted by the intermittent sounds of voices carried by the hot breeze through the canyon. After climbing over another downed tree trunk and rounding a wide bend in the river, we saw a group of construction workers along the muddy bank. With picks, shovels, and metal carts, they were building a pathway up the side of the mountain. Mr. Liu approached them, asking in Chinese if they knew the way to the meditation cliff. They turned and pointed straight up the hill. They had been hired to build steps up to the sacred plateau. It was far from finished – barely begun, in fact.

Our climb to Zhang Sanfeng's meditation cliff was like traversing a boulder-strewn mudslide. Mr. Liu opted to remain by the river and await our return. The slippery 45-degree slope of the hillside made it difficult to carry our large cameras. Red and tan granite sludge stained our clothing as we ascended the precipice. We reached a tall stacked-stone wall. Along its frontal edge, facing the river, there was a narrow cobblestone path that led us to an old crumbling gate that hung on stout hinges from the stone wall. There was no lock, and the handle was badly damaged, so the gate opened with a gentle shove.

Inside, there was a long wooden shed, having the

stacked stones for its outside wall and the vertical mountain cliff for the other, with decayed rafters holding up a crumbling roof. Straight ahead was a flat terrace of rock and dirt about 20 feet wide. In front of that balcony was a sheer cliff that dropped into the river. Behind the ledge, numerous concave pockets were carved into the sedimentary rock strata. Many ancient statues, all in various states of disrepair, sat in those voids. Some were severely weathered and faded. Others had broken heads and limbs lying in disarray on the ground around their stone bases. Once vibrantly colored in their day of glory, the dilapidated idols were waiting for eventual repair to honor Zhang Sanfeng, who had found solace in this place, more than 700 years ago.

After spending some time photographing the relics, we sat quietly to admire the view of distant valleys across the river and appreciate the serenity of the meditation cliff. After that brief rest, we rose, packed our gear, and headed back down the mountain. The descent seemed more slippery. Skidding, sliding, and stumbling along the way, sometimes squatting low to keep from falling over, we returned to Mr. Liu and the construction workers.

The climb and descent were more strenuous than we expected. So once we arrived back at the river, we took off our shoes and socks to cool our feet in the water. With sweat pouring off us in small rivulets, we sat on rocky ledges surrounded by small pools and mulled over what we'd just experienced. The workers gave us curious stares, surely wondering, "Who are

these people and why are they here?”

After a short respite, we started the long trek back. After an hour retreating through the quasi-familiar valley, we came to a small meadow with short deciduous trees, where we'd seen the monkeys along the canyon walls earlier.

Ahead of us on the path stood an old woman carrying a canvas bag. She was a local merchant selling small paper sacks of peanuts. Beyond her there was a troop of macaque monkeys scampering around the pathway and trees. What an unexpected pleasure that they would be so close! We unpacked our video cameras and prepared to become wildlife photographers.



After buying two bags of peanuts, we moved slowly into the trees filled with wild monkeys. Hearing the crinkling of the paper sacks, the monkeys began to

amble toward us, both on the ground and through the trees. We began to toss peanuts into the bushes. Some of the monkeys ventured quite close, their reddish brown hair glistening in the hot, humid sunlight. With wide, golden eyes, they looked at us curiously but cautiously.

Noticing a rustling of leaves, we watched a monkey leap onto a tree branch just above us. He was so CUTE that Anita could not resist smiling and talking softly to him. Big mistake! The monkey started chattering wildly and crashed through the tree limbs, scattering small branches and leaves, with teeth bared and fire in his eyes. The wild crash of leaves and tree branches stopped just above her head. He leapt from the tree and pounced right in front of her. Anita clasped her hand over her mouth, lowered her gaze, and shrank back. The monkey stopped. Bending slowly to the ground, Anita poured the remaining peanuts from the bag onto the grass as a peace offering and slowly backed away, averting direct eye contact and staying low to the ground.

Calm discretion saved the day. But that was a harsh reminder that wild animals can be ferocious, even if they look cute.



## MUSINGS

*The woods are lovely, dark and deep,  
But I have promises to keep,  
And miles to go before I sleep,  
And miles to go before I sleep.*

— Robert Frost —

# SACRED MOUNTAINS



**M**ount Everest is the highest mountain on Earth. Most mountains are famous because of their height: Mount McKinley in Alaska, Mount Fuji in Japan, Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania Africa, Mount Elbrus in Russia, and Mount Aconcagua in Argentina.

Other mountains are legendary: Mount Sinai is where Moses received the Ten Commandments; Mount Ararat is where Noah's Ark came to rest after the great flood.

Many of those mountains are both renowned and sacred to many people for various religious reasons. China has many sacred mountains revered by Taoist and Buddhist pilgrims for centuries.

Our pilgrimages have focused on four sacred mountains where martial arts originated – where warrior monks developed skills to protect the temples. Thus, we share our experiences on Songshan, Omeishan, Huashan, and Wudangshan.





## SONG MOUNTAIN

(Songshan, 嵩山)

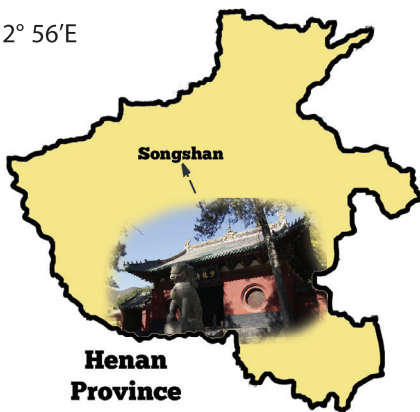
**Location:** Henan Province

**Latitude/Longitude:** 34° 30.5'N/112° 56'E

**Elevation:** 4,900 feet

**Religion:** Buddhism

**Kung Fu Styles:** staff/bo, butterfly knives, hand axes, daggers, chain whip, 3-sectional staff, double-edge straight sword, tiger hook swords, broadsword, nunchaku, Snake, Praying Mantis, Monkey, Dragon, Lohan Fist



***Song Mountain*** is part of the Grand Mountain range that surrounds the original home of the Shaolin Buddhist Temple near Dengfeng, China, between Zhengzhou and Luoyang.

Around 464 A.D., a Buddhist monk, called Ba Tuo by the Chinese, traveled from India to central China.

Ba Tuo received a land grant from Emperor Hsiao Wen Di to build the original Shaolin Temple in Henan Province and became the first Shaolin Temple abbot in 495 A.D. The original Xiao Xing sect (or Lesser Vehicle Buddhism), initially introduced at the Shaolin Temple by Ba Tuo, had many complex theological rules and rituals – hundreds of rules for men plus different rules for women.

Around 527 A.D., another Buddhist monk arrived in China. He was known in India as Bodhidharma and to the Chinese as PuTi Damo. Damo preached the Greater Vehicle form of Buddhism that was called Dhyana in India and Ch'an Buddhism by the Chinese. It became known as Zen Buddhism in Japan, where Damo is called by the name Daruma. Damo's Buddhist theology focused on deep meditation for practitioners. To dramatize his tenacity to teach the Shaolin monks the methods and effectiveness of his religious beliefs, it is said that Damo meditated in a cave at the top of the hill above the Shaolin Temple monastery for nine years – so long that his shadow was burned into the rock of the cave wall. Damo is revered as the patriarch of martial training that produced the legendary skills and fighting prowess of the monks at the Shaolin Temple.

Over the centuries, Shaolin martial arts, meditation, and herbal medicine expanded to other provinces in China, including Fujian, Shandong (Shantung), Hubei, Shaanxi, Sichuan, and Guangdong. The Fujian temple, built around 650 A.D., was larger than the Henan temple and considered to be the southern headquarters

of the Shaolin monasteries. It served as the primary refuge for monks during times when the Henan temple came under attack.

The original Henan Shaolin Temple at Songhan has been the setting for many motion pictures and television shows, including *The Shaolin Temple* (1982), starring Jet Li, and the *Kung Fu* TV series (1972-75), starring David Carradine.



## OMEI MOUNTAIN

### (Omeishan, 峨眉山)

(pinyin – Emeishan)

**Location:** Sichuan Province

**Latitude/Longitude:**

29° 31.4'N/103° 20.2'E

**Elevation:** 10,150 feet

**Religion:** Buddhism (early Taoism)

**Kung Fu Styles:** spear, White Crane,  
Eagle Claw, Golden Rooster, Ostrich



***Omei Mountain*** is located near Chengdu in Sichuan province. Omeishan is considered one of China's most sacred mountains, with a religious history that began centuries before Songshan. The mountain is frequently blanketed in clouds and fog that shroud the mountain's lush environment, thus creating a mystical atmosphere. It is said that when the clouds reveal the top of the mountain, it

is like a beautiful maiden slowly revealing her face. Therefore, some refer to Omeishan as the “Beautiful Eyebrow Mountain.” Buddhists refer to it as “Brilliant Mountain” to honor the Omei bodhisattva, *Puxian*.

The summit is 10,150 feet above sea level. The morning sun occasionally casts the shadow of mountain pilgrims onto the cloud deck surrounding the peak. Their shadow sometimes gets ringed in a rainbow halo, locally called “Buddha Light.” It is an atmospheric phenomenon known scientifically as an anticorona or glory, which is commonly observed by aircraft pilots when the shadow of their aircraft passes over nearby clouds.

The great height of the mountain provides an environment for many diverse species of plants, animals, and insects. Foliage varies from palm trees and dense groves of bamboo at lower elevations to lush fern and pine forests near the summit.

Darting among the branches of the trees, woolly rhesus monkeys roam freely. For centuries, Chinese physicians have used hundreds of Omei plants and herbs for healing and nutritional purposes.

Bai Mei Daosin, the White Eyebrow Monk, is a legendary character in Chinese martial arts. It is said his skills made him virtually indestructible. Bai Mei is said to have been an abbot at Omeishan.

Currently, Omeishan is experiencing a period of spiritual growth for Buddhist monasteries and a period of reconstruction for mountain temples and historic treasures.





## HUA MOUNTAIN

(Huashan, 华山)

**Location:** Shaanxi Province

**Latitude/Longitude:** 34° 28.7'N/110° 04.7'E

**Elevation:** 7,086 feet

**Religion:** Taoism

**Kung Fu Styles:** Fists of Hua,  
Taoist Immortals, Hua Tuo 5 Animals



The formidable, white granite *Hua Mountain* is located in Shaanxi Province, east of Xi'an, north of the Chin mountain range and south of the Yellow River. Hua means “magnificent” and “flower” in ancient Chinese. Huashan is commonly called “Lotus

Mountain,” as its peaks are arranged like the petals of a blossom.

In the Taoist religion, this mountain has been a citadel for monks and pilgrims for more than 2,400 years. Its five sacred peaks represent the five spiritual elements of the Taoist universe: Central Peak/Earth, North Peak/Water, South Peak/Fire, East Peak/Wood, and West Peak/Metal. To reach all five peaks requires climbing tens of thousands of steps across steep terrain, typically inclined at 50° to 85° angles. Hua Mountain inspired the title, *10,000 Steps Straight Up*.

Hua Mountain is rich with folklore, legend, and historical characters. The “Chess Pavilion” is located in a rugged area near Hua’s East Peak, called the Botai Terrace. This is where Abbot Chen Tuan, founder of the Huashan Taoist sect, challenged Song Dynasty Emperor Zhao Kaungyin to play the Chinese chess game *Wei Chi* (called “Go” in Japanese). They made a wager – Chen Tuan’s lifelong servitude bet against ownership of the entire Hua mountain range. The emperor lost. Thus, the Taoist monks were given title to the mountain.

The legendary Taoist patriarch, Lao Tzu (580-500 B.C.), was challenged to write down his philosophical treatise, *Tao Te Ching*, at Hangu Pass, near Huashan. There is a place between West Peak and South Peak called “Lao Tzu’s furnace,” where legend says Lao Tzu made his pills of immortality.

Another renowned figure in Chinese history is connected with the mountain. Dr. Hua Tuo, is as famous a physician in China as Hippocrates is

to western medicine. He was also famous as the originator of some Hua martial arts health and fitness training, (Five Animal Play).

Pilgrims have been compelled to climb the craggy, perilous terrain of Mt. Hua for more than two millennia. Whether it is the remote seclusion or the search for some mystical elixir, people who climb this mountain always discover its grandeur.

Hua is one of China's most deadly mountains. Careless stumbles cause many people to fall to their deaths every year. The steps carved into the rugged granite are hand-hewn, mostly made during the last several hundred years. Previously, recluse monks climbed this pinnacle of enlightenment for centuries without such convenience – only handholds and foot notches.

The monks of Huashan had to be nimble and strong because of the difficult terrain. This gave rise to some unique martial arts styles. Of the many martial folk stories, perhaps the most significant related to Hua Mountain is that of the historical characters, collectively called *Baxian* – The Eight Immortals.



## WUDANG MOUNTAIN

(Wudangshan, 武当山)

**Location:** Hubei Province

**Latitude/Longitude:**

32° 24.1'N/111° 00.3'E

**Elevation:** 5,288 feet

**Religion:** Taoism

**Kung Fu Styles:** Tai Chi

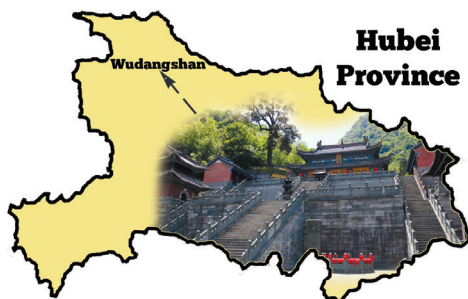
Chuan (Taijiquan), Pa Kua

Chang (Baguazhang),

Hsing I Chuan (Xingyiquan),

broadsword, double-edged straight sword, Seven Star Sword,

Green Dragon Sword, Horse-Hair Whisk, Taoist Immortals



The indigenous religion of China is Taoism. The Taoist monks of **Wudang Mountain** claim the history of this sacred mountain began around 3,000 B.C. Zhen Wu is honored as the mythical deity whose search for

enlightenment is the foundation of Taoist beliefs at Wudang. Zhen Wu is the god of the north, which is represented by the Taoist element, water. Wudangshan means, “Zhen Wu deserves this mountain.” The spirit animal of Wudang is symbolized by the image of *Xuan Wu* – a turtle with a snake.

Taoist cultural history describes Wudang Mountain as the “Fairy Mountain.” On this religious sanctuary, there are 72 temples constructed on the main 72 mountain peaks. Purple Cloud Temple is the primary site for large, traditional Taoist ceremonies. There are eight palaces, 36 nunneries, and 12 pavilions that honor Taoist deities and historic patriarchs, like Lao Tzu. The oldest Taoist temple of Wudang is now submerged under the Dangjiangkou Reservoir. The oldest remaining temple on Wudangshan is the Five Dragon Palace. The summit of Wudang is called Tianzhu Peak, where the Jin Ding (Golden Hall) Temple was built during the Ming Dynasty.

Practitioners of traditional herbal medicine have found more than 400 plants, suitable as healing remedies, growing wild in the Wudang Mountain Range.

The most significant martial arts story from Wudang is that of Zhang Sanfeng, who was the creator of Tai Chi Chuan, the “Grand Ultimate Fist.”







# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

*This glossary is not an all-inclusive resource. Readers are encouraged to independently explore martial arts concepts, philosophies, and history.*

**Abbot** – senior spiritual leader of a monastery.

**Chi** – natural life force energy that every human being possesses; breath; or spirit.

**Chi kung** (Qigong) – isometric and breathing exercises to circulate chi throughout the body.

**Confucius** – (551-479 BC) Chinese philosopher and teacher.

**Cultural Revolution** – (1966-1976) dictated communist economic and social reform that purged capitalism and traditional values from Chinese society.

**Damo** – Buddhist monk and patriarch of Shaolin kung fu, known as Bodhidharma in India.

**Dan tian** – the focal point of chi energy in a human body, centered in the abdominal cavity.

**Drunken-style** – martial arts forms that use the appearance of drunkenness to elude or distract an opponent.

**Eight Immortals** (Baxian) – legendary Taoist saints who achieved great martial arts prowess and immortality.

**Five elements** (Wu Xing) – fundamental Taoist cosmic material: wood, earth, water, fire, and metal.

**General Kwan Kung** (Guan Yu) – famous Chinese general known for his superior fighting ability and weapons.

**Grandmaster** – senior leader of a martial arts lineage.

**Head monk** – senior male disciple of a monastery.

**Head nun** - senior female disciple of a convent.

**Ho Tien Chi** – exercises to control chi circulation.

**I Chin Ching** (Yijin Jing) – 49 isometric postures to exercise muscles, tendons, breathing, and mental concentration.

**Kung Fu** – term for quantity and quality of time, energy, and effort dedicated to a skill, especially martial arts.

**Lao Tzu** (Laozi, Li Er) – (~500 BC) poet and philosopher, Taoist patriarch, author of *Tao Te Ching*.

**Local guide** – a Chinese tour guide who has understanding of local attractions and dialect.

**Mao Zedong** – (1893-1976) first Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party; founded People's Republic of China.

**Master** – highly skilled martial artist instructor cultivated by years of dedication and practice.

**Monkey King** (Sun Wukong) – mythical character from Chinese folklore who had martial knowledge mixed with the mischievous characteristics of monkeys.

**National guide** – a licensed Chinese tour guide who has skill and understanding of nationwide travel.

**Nine section steel chain whip** – a martial arts weapon, approximately six to eight feet long, made of nine steel shanks jointed and linked by steel rings, including a steel grip handle and a pointed steel dart at the ends, which is whirled and swung like a whip.

**Pagoda Forest** – ancient graveyard at the Henan Shaolin Temple containing the remains of abbots and monks.

**Pidgin English** – colloquial, unskilled broken English.

**Pinyin** – the official phonetic system for translating Chinese characters and words into the Latin alphabet.

**Red Guard** – Cultural Revolution paramilitary enforcement unit mobilized by Mao Zedong.

**Shaolin** – the Chan sect of Buddhism and religious temples across China.

**Shaolin Kung Fu** – the martial arts that originated from Shaolin temples 1,500 years ago.

**Shaolin Temple** – a Buddhist monastery.

**Sun Tzu** – (~500 BC) highly skilled Chinese general and strategist, author of *The Art of War*.

**Tai Chi Chuan** – “Grand Ultimate Fist,” internal martial art form with slow meditative movements, created by Zhang Sanfeng

**Tai Chi Iron Fan** – a Chen Tai Chi form that utilizes a folding silk fan with steel ribs for a weapon.

**Tao Te Ching (Dao De Jing)** – sacred religious text of Taoism, philosophical treatise written by Lao Tzu.

**Zhang Sanfeng** – legendary martial artist who studied at the Henan Shaolin Temple; later a master at Wudang Mountain; creator of Tai Chi Chuan martial arts.

## RECOMMENDED READING

*The Art of War* by Sun Tzu.

*Tao Te Ching (Dao De Jing)* by Lao Tzu.

*China, A Concise Cultural History* by Arthur Cotterell.  
ISBN 978-0719546778.

*The Secret Piano* by Zho Xiao-Mei,  
translated by Ellen Hinsey. ISBN 978-1611090772.

*Chinese Boxing: Masters And Methods* by Robert W. Smith.  
ISBN 978-1556430855.

*Shaolin Kung-Fu* by Ying Zi and Weng Yi.  
Kingsway International Publications.

*Shaolin Kung-Fu*, edited by Cai Liuhai,  
ISBN 978-7540102463.

*The Eight Immortals of Taoism*,  
by Kwok Man Ho and Joanne O'Brien. ISBN 978-0452010703.

*Introduction to Shaolin Kung Fu* by Wong Kiew Kit.  
ISBN 978-1874250210.

*Iron and Silk* by Mark Salzman. ISBN 978-0394755113.

*Outlaws Of The Marsh* by Shi Nai'An, translated by Sidney Shapiro.  
ISBN 978-7119016627.

*Secrets Of Shaolin Temple Boxing* by Robert W. Smith.  
ISBN 978-0804816304.

*There Are No Secrets: Professor Cheng Man Ch'ing and his Tai Chi Chuan*  
by Wolfe Lowenthal. ISBN 978-1556431128.

*Kung Fu: History, Philosophy, And Techniques*  
by David Chow and Richard Spangler. ISBN 978-0865680111.

*Qigong, The Secret Of Youth* by Dr. Yang Jwing-Ming.  
ISBN 978-1886969841.

*Riding The Iron Rooster* by Paul Theroux. ISBN 978-0618658978.

*Chinese Herbal Medicine: Materia Medica, Third Edition*  
by Dan Bensky, Steven Clavey and Erich Stoger. ISBN 978-0939616428.

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<http://www.MooseMountainPublishing.com/KSU>

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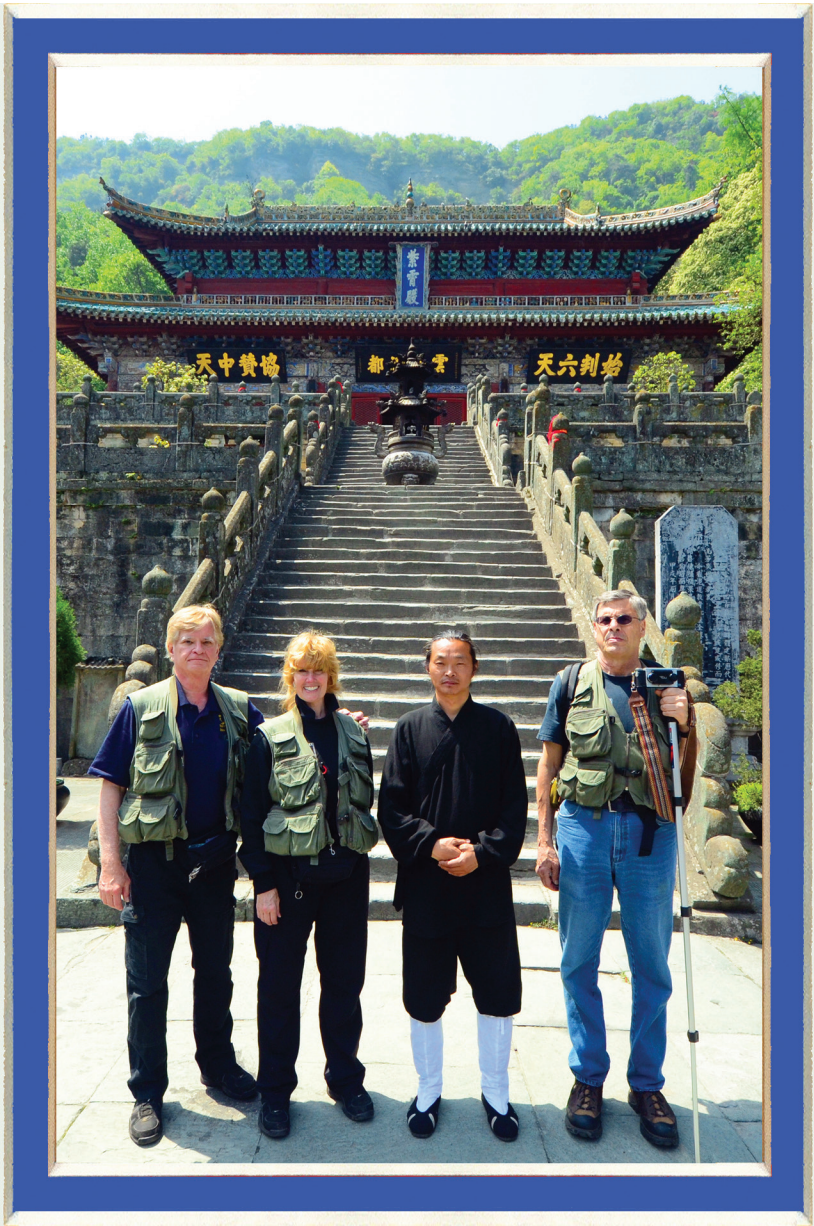
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### YouTube

DenEyeFX





## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Photo taken at Hua Mountain, Shaanxi Province, China, 2002

**Dennis** and **Anita Lunt** have been Chinese martial arts students for more than 25 years and have attained the rank of third-degree black belt. Their kung fu school travels to China periodically for cultural exchanges. A school trip in 1996 was the first of many expeditions. Additional research of martial arts history has spawned many independent pilgrimages to China's sacred mountains.

For their efforts in video production, they won the ***Best Documentary*** award at the **6th Annual Silver Spoon Film Festival-2005**, Rialto Theater, in Loveland, Colorado.

They live in the Colorado Rocky Mountains, where their 30-year marriage is inspired by nature and friends, and with Moose Mountain in their backyard.

